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MAY 2005

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GOOD NEWS!

Teens Not Ungrateful!

Readers reveal this and other amazing discoveries from a year that roared with challenges.

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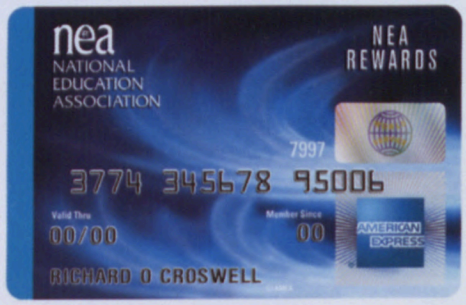

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MAY

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features

COVER 22

GOOD NEWS

Testing, dwindling budgets, NCLB—enough already. What on Earth went right this year? We asked, and you answered, "Plenty!" From the students who discovered what gratitude really means to the teacher whose wildly generous students inspired her to kiss a pig (OK, it was a contest), you wrote about the unexpected, and wonderful, happenings in schools across America.

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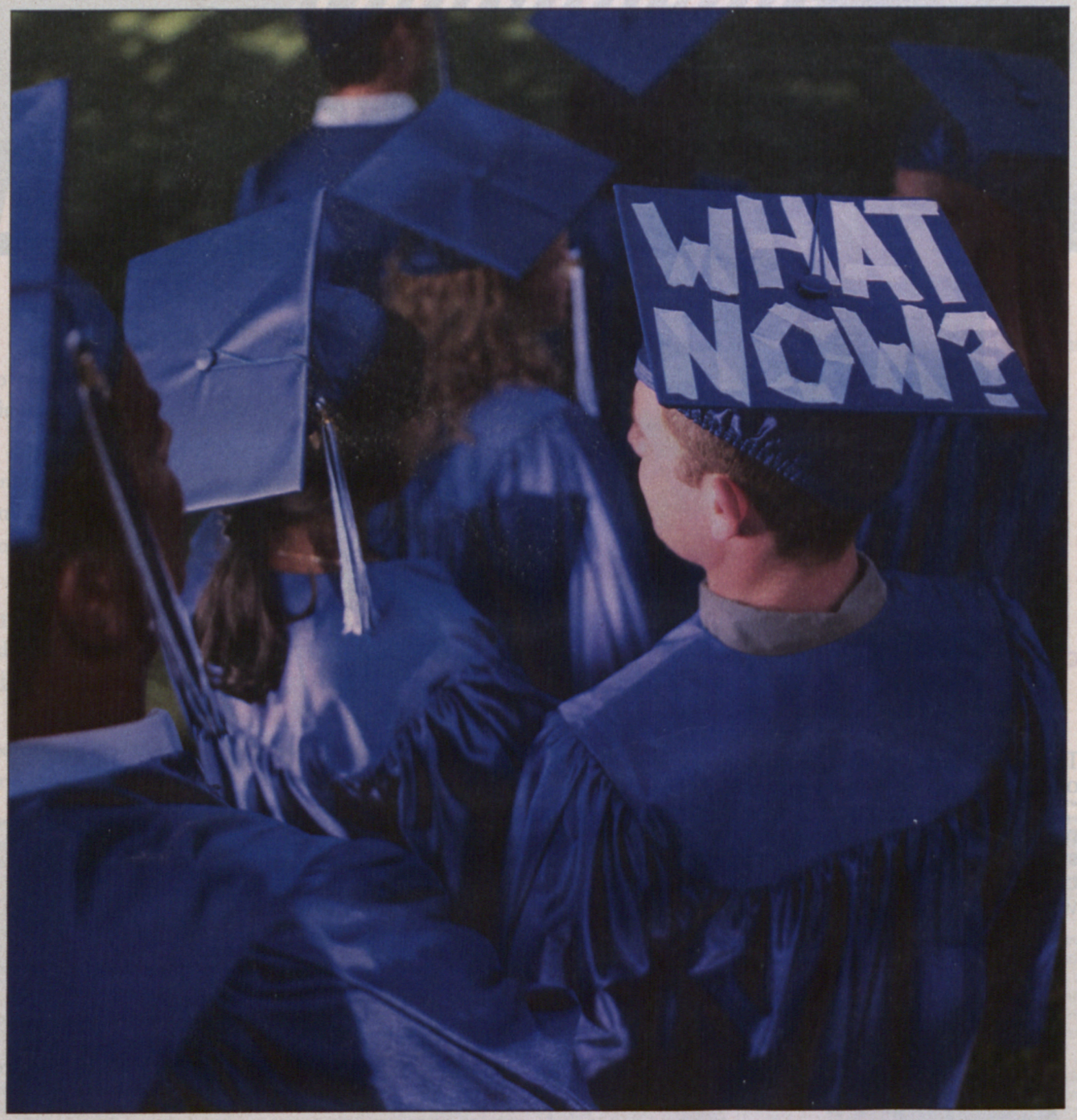
What's your idea of the perfect vacation? Soaking in a vat of chocolate? Sleeping in an igloo? Then check out these fantasy destinations guaranteed to turn your wildest dreams into relaxing realities.

SMALL PHOTOS AND ART BOTTOM, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: PATRICIA McDONNELL, STEVE SHELTON, CREATAS, JOHN SCHMELZER



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Nearly half of all new teachers leave the profession during their first five years. While low pay sends some of them packing, most leave for another reason: nobody's listening to them.

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Arizona support professionals create an NEA local from scratch. Their formula: numbers, leadership, and vision.

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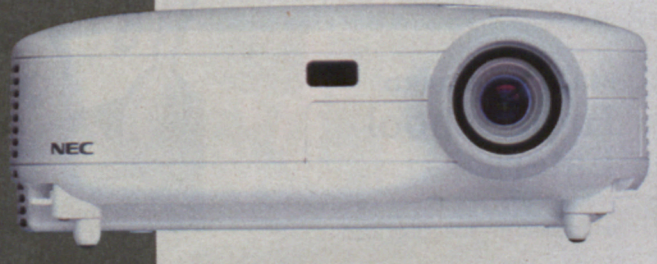

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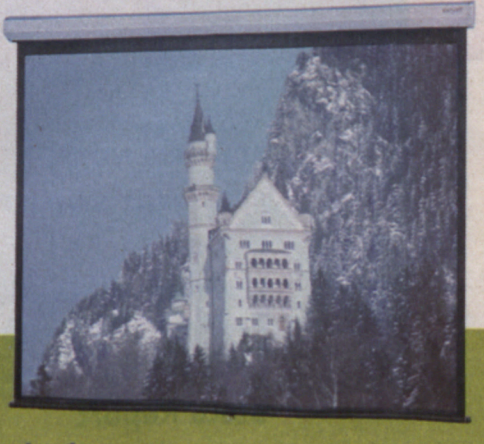

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Shout It Out

Ever listen to Bobby McFerrin's sunny tune, "Don't Worry, Be Happy" and think, "Gimme a break"? Curmudgeon I'm not, but I know the feeling. Sometimes it feels plain wrong to just whistle along when so much is unsettled in your life and in the world. Like me, though, I suspect you've developed perspective. Hand wringing too much about the bad stuff can definitely make you blind to the good stuff—those spectacular moments that flitter by just perfectly: Your fifth-grader shouts, "I get it!" You say, "aha!" A parent beams. ¶ So when we asked you a few months back to share some of those moments with us—your "good news"—it was our way of making sure you ended the year, well, in perspective. We figured it was worth noting that success and happiness don't always revolve around a healthy school ledger, or off-the-chart test scores, or a thumbs-up from the district. ¶ What does matter? To be honest, we weren't sure you'd have time to tell us. But you regaled us with a bounty of inspiring tales. They're wildly different one from the other, as you'll see from those we've plucked for our cover story (page 22). Yet together, they tell the complex and remarkable story of you. ¶ There's you working creatively with colleagues and with parents, ushering kids through milestones in their lives, mining the humor in the little things, turning failures into lessons. Above all, there's you honoring your mission (and, every so often, allowing others to honor you). ¶ The wonderful staff at *NEA Today* worked hard this year to reflect you in these pages, so your stories became a powerful affirmation of our own work—and an inspiration, too. For that, we say thanks. And because this is our last issue until September, we also say so long. ¶ Have a joyous summer. Celebrate a year of victories. Whistle loudly. Don't worry, be happy. And write us! We'll be meeting up before you know.

Marilyn Milloy

EDITOR MARILYN MILLOY

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'From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life.'

—ARTHUR ASHE

We read about them every month in the pages of this magazine. We rub shoulders with them in our schools. We team up with them to make our communities better places.

Heroes.

The single mom who, after working hard all day as a high school custodian, trudges off to the local elementary school to meet with her child's teacher, instead of staying home and putting her feet up.

The retired music teacher who spends his mornings using music to teach language to preschool children with special needs. His students often learn to sing first and then to speak.

The middle school math teacher who stays late four days a week to tutor students in geometry and algebra so someday they will be able to attend college.

The cafeteria worker who, while dishing out the food she's cooked, keeps a vigilant eye on her diabetic students so they don't eat too much sugar and starch.

The elementary school teacher who goes to school at nights to learn Spanish so she can communicate with her students' parents.

The special education assistant who helps the special education teacher with children with the most severe disabilities—changing their diapers when they need changing.

The science teacher whose enthusiasm and preparation makes the subject come alive in her students' minds, lighting a fire that will glow for a lifetime.

The high school teacher who starts a chess club as an outlet for his most restless, high energy students—and then hauls them off to every chess tournament in the state.

The school bus driver who every year organizes a skiing weekend for inner city kids who otherwise would never get to ski or play in the snow.

The community college instructor who teaches English as a second language to immigrants at four different campuses and spends so much time in her car that her colleagues have dubbed her "the road scholar."

Heroes every one.

It is easy to take these folks for granted, though, because they don't toot their own horn. They're everyday people, not celebrities. I like to call them "unsung heroes." In fact, they don't think of themselves as heroes at all, and when someone like me sings their praises, it kind of embarrasses them. But that doesn't stop me.

Our unsung heroes are the exception to the rule that when all is said and done, more is said than done. Their actions speak louder than words. And in a society that rewards getting rather than giving, they give of themselves for the good of others, and then they give some more.

Yes, it is easy to take our unsung heroes for granted, but we must not. For they are the heart and soul of our Association. These are the folks who, when you come to them with a problem, always say: "What are we going to do about it?" They think in terms of possibilities rather than impossibilities, solutions rather than setbacks, and dos rather than don'ts.

"It is easy to take our unsung heroes for granted, but we must not. For they are the heart and soul of our Association."

—REG WEAVER

Of course I am aware that a hero is often defined as somebody who does something dangerous to help somebody else. The firefighter who rushes into a burning building to save a child is definitely a hero. For me, however, the burn unit nurse who tenderly and skillfully cares for that firefighter's wounds through his long and agonizing recovery also qualifies as a hero. And so, too, do the many public school and college employees and retired and student educators I have had the privilege of meeting and knowing as president of NEA.

As educators and Association members, we are in the hope business, and these unsung heroes of ours, above all else, give us hope even during the times when hope seems ready to freeze over.

Unsung heroes of NEA, I am your number one fan!

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: SANDY SCHAEFFER

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Thank you for the excellent coverage of the privatization of Social Security (April, cover story). As a risk-averse person, I opted in 1968 to take the guaranteed payment option in the Wisconsin Retirement System. Over the years, I also kept my other investments very conservative. While friends and colleagues laughed at me and rolled up double-digit gains, my secure investments chugged along. I retired at age 56 and am living in a beautiful new home on a scenic northern Wisconsin lake. (Many of my friends are still working to recover their market losses of the post-9/11 period.)

I also volunteer at a local food pantry where many clients are working poor and some are mentally challenged. These are *not* people who would have the savvy to do well in a world of investment they do not begin to comprehend. I fear that the people who can least afford to risk their future Social Security checks would not be able to resist the temptation to do so. The results could be disastrous!

KATHLEEN MARSH
Townsend, Wisconsin

Your article about Social Security presented a tired one-sided perspective. In my family, we look forward to the prospect of setting Social Security on a new track that will greatly benefit our children's retirement future. It is unseemly that we pay into a fund that benefits others—primarily politicians who have a slush fund to raid any time they wish. And what is so fearsome about paying into your own retirement fund?

PATRICIA CHRISTIE
Fort Wayne, Indiana

NEA members need to be able to navigate an often confusing media barrage on the subject of Social Security. Your informative response to the question, "Is your retirement safe?" will help teachers understand that they have a lot that is at risk in this serious challenge to pension security.

CLARE BARNETT
Middlebury, Connecticut

'BEING GAY'

Your April article "Teaching Tolerance" was obscene. Tolerance means willfully enduring something unpleasant. Teachers should not "tolerate" gay students any more than they should "tolerate" African-American students. Tolerance is not what gay students need; respect and dignity are. Nothing else is acceptable.

RAY SHELTON
Glendale, California

After a high school student's tragic suicide a couple of years ago, rumors spread here that the young man had succumbed to harassment about his sexuality. And the sadness didn't end there: A friend of his tried to kill himself at the same time, and was robbed of his sight.

In my opinion, the community failed to deal with the situation in a healthy way. We just didn't know what to do. Maybe Kevin Jennings' organization (the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) could have helped.

MARY WHITMORE
Forest Grove, Oregon

THE POWER OF ENVIRONMENT

Thank you for your article on the power of the learning environment ("Classroom Cool," April). My students and I invested much of ourselves into our environment the past seven years, and it became both a

refuge and an inspiration for most of the students who passed its threshold.

This year, I'm in a new school and I travel from room to room with no way to create a truly enriching environment. This has had such a significant impact on me that I've chosen to look for another position with the preeminent criterion being a classroom I can call "our" own. After serious reflection, I have come to realize the essential role environment plays in making me the best teacher I can be.

MIKE METZLER
Victor, New York

SCHOOLS, NOT PRISONS

Thank you for the excellent article regarding the issue of increased funds for prisons, yet decreased funds for those of us in the school system. (UpFront, April.) With more than 2 million prisoners currently in the United States, massive unemployment, and a school system that doesn't give us enough resources to prepare students for work and/or higher education, we desperately need to do something. For more information on NEA member efforts, see www.ednotinc.org.

LISA GUTIERREZ GUZMAN
San Francisco, California

EXTRA CREDIT?

Regarding the question of extra credit assignments for failing students (Debate, April), I think the better question is: Should we allow students a way to avoid failing? During my 35 years of teaching middle school English, I discovered students didn't need to fail. When I returned a test or paper, I offered those with grades below B the opportunity to improve. We would discuss the weak areas and then the student would redo a section. The bottom line was, both the student and I would see genuine learning.

NANCY FLESCHER
Wellesley, Massachusetts

SPECIAL WORDS

Having taught children with special needs for more than 25 years, I was delighted to read the April article ("Power Tools") on how assistive technologies are working in our classrooms for many children—and even more pleased to see the wonderful classroom teachers embracing children with such needs. But we must be aware of the appropriate descriptors. The cover, which read "Cool Technology for Special Needs Kids," would have been better stated as "Cool Technology for Children with Special Needs." Let us remember that all children want to be seen as typical.

VICTORIA ARNOLD
Hanover, Pennsylvania

"Teachers should not 'tolerate' gay students any more than they should 'tolerate' African-American students. Tolerance is not what gay students need; respect and dignity are. Nothing else is acceptable." —RAY SHELTON

QUIZ SHOW LESSONS

An April article shows students using "response pads" donated by eInstruction Corp (UpFront) in quiz show-style lessons. Could you provide me with contact information?

DEBBIE TIENE
Nutley, New Jersey

(From the editors: Check out eInstruction at www.eInstruction.com or call 1-888-707-6819.)

Correction: The author of an April letter about a Last Bell essay, "No More Carrots," was incorrectly identified as John Luvera of Coupeville, Washington. The writer was, in fact, John Luvera of Butler, New Jersey. We greatly regret the error.

LET'S TALK

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upfront

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Pulpit Chorus: 'Fix NCLB'

It's no secret that education and community groups are joining hands in increasing numbers to press for improvements to the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). But what about religious leaders? Should they keep hands off? Absolutely not, says Jan Resseger of the United Church of Christ (UCC). Indeed, she feels that working to fix the law is a religious duty. "Public education is the largest civic institution in this nation," Resseger notes, "so it's important that 'love our neighbors as ourselves' be embedded in that institution."

Resseger, who works for the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries, has been mobilizing religious groups to join the alliance of organizations working together for common sense changes in the law—and she's making progress: the 53-member alliance now includes the National Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church, and several other Christian and Jewish organizations.

Resseger says she and her colleagues are alarmed at the growing resegregation of our schools, made worse by NCLB because urban schools are targeted as failures even when they're doing a good job. The way to really leave no child behind, Resseger argues, is to "invest in policies that we know matter, like small classes and incentives for the best teachers to come into the most challenging areas. We need to invest more in places where children face the challenges of poverty."

Read more at www.nea.org/neatodayextra. Find out about NCLB myths on page 32.

Good News!

TODAY'S TEENS are having fewer babies and are less likely to die in an accident, homicide, or suicide, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual Kids Count report. Births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 have fallen from 38 in 1994 to 23 in 2002, the most recent data available. And deaths occurring because of accident, homicide, or suicide among 15- to 19-year-olds dropped from 68 in 1994 to 50 per 100,000 in 2001, the most recent data for those numbers.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: PHOTODISC

Belle of the Ball

Ah, prom night—the time teenage girls don pretty gowns and fancy themselves princesses. But what does an aspiring Cinderella do if she doesn't have a dress for the ball?

SHE TURNS TO HER FAIRY GODMOTHER, of course. At least that's what hundreds of girls in Clark County, Washington, are doing, thanks to the Vancouver School District Foundation. Last year the foundation began Operation Fairy Godmother, a program to collect used and new formal and semiformal dresses and accessories, for the county's high school seniors. Girls either donate their used dresses to select a different one at no cost or simply purchase a gown for $10. Students who don't have a formal to donate or the $10 to buy one may be eligible to receive a dress voucher. The program collected more than 500 dresses the first year.

Liana Brown, a senior at Mount Vancouver High School who helped with the dress campaign last year, estimates that 65 girls donated dresses from her school alone. "That's 65 girls who'll be able to get an affordable dress for the prom this year," she says, "and that's great."

No glass slippers, though.

—MAYA T. PRABHU

Helping Hands

When mammoth waves destroyed lives and schools in the Indian Ocean last December, educators around the world opened their wallets to help their colleagues rebuild. As of *NEA Today's* press deadline, NEA members had donated more than $104,000 to the **TSUNAMI FUND** established by Education International (EI), the world federation of educators' unions. Meanwhile, members have given $6,000 to the EI **FUND FOR BESLAN, RUSSIA**, where a very different, human-made disaster hit in September: 20 teachers murdered in a school hostage takeover. The fund will guarantee that their children can complete their educations.

Notepad

A Benefit That Isn't

Proponents of 401 (k)-style retirement plans often say these plans are better suited to today's mobile employees, who might not stick around long enough to vest in a traditional defined-benefit pension plan.

A recent study by Hewitt Associates hints at the downside: many workers with 401 (k)s use the portability to raid their own nest egg. A whopping 42 percent drained their retirement account as they cleaned out their desks—even though it meant they had to pay taxes on the funds and an additional penalty. Even among those ages 50–59, who should be coming down the home stretch to retirement, one-third cashed out their 401 (k)s when they changed jobs.

Defined-benefit pension plans not only offer more retirement security via a guaranteed monthly check, they often allow you to purchase service credit, in case you move from one retirement system to another during your career. Check with your pension system for details.

But many states are considering forcing public employees into 401 (k)-style plans.

For more, see the April *NEA Today* cover story and go to www.nea.org/retired/tools/publications.html.

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It's About Time!

Time! What time? We know you don't have enough hours in the school day to do everything you need to do—take attendance, track and report student discipline, write lesson plans (aligned to state standards, of course), compile Individualized Education Plans, and, oh, what else, maybe teach?

CHECK OUT THE NEA TEACHER TOOLKIT at www.neateachertoolkit.com, where help is just a click or two away. The ToolKit is a suite of Web-based tools designed by your colleagues to help you assemble class rosters, track attendance, report discipline problems, and document academic interventions and their results.

With the ToolKit's seven-step Individualized Education Plan (IEP) module, it's also much easier to develop a student-focused, standards-based IEP, says NEA's Patti Ralabate. Normally it can take three hours per plan, but "if you follow our Web-based tool you can go to the IEP meeting with draft goals, seek the parents' assistance, and make changes to them if necessary, and have the IEP done in an hour—maybe less."

More neat stuff—including online grade books, personalized assessments, and performance tools to show the percentage of students who have mastered each standard—will be available on the site by May 1 at an annual cost of $71.95 for NEA members.

'Sorry, that's mine now!'

SOMEWHERE by your knees, underneath the test reports, Individualized Education Plans, and Slim-Fast snack bars, there's a desk drawer with the good stuff. It's a stash of super bouncing balls, singing pens, love-stained notes, and other precious distractions that your students are just dying for—because you snatched them from their hands six months ago.

So give them to us! Share some of the best stories, oddest items, and other excitements from your drawer of confiscated goodies. **Send them to neatoday-reply@list.nea.org.**

ILLUSTRATION TOP: DIGITAL VISION; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: CHAD SHAFFER , PHOTOS BOTTOM: STOCKBYTE, PHOTODISC, NICK KOUDIS, STOCKDISC

Remembering One of Their Own

Joyce Gregory and Neva Rogers never met. But they shared a common commitment to their students, their friends, and their colleagues. "She was just an outgoing person," says Jamie Baggett, a special education teacher who worked with Gregory at Stewart County High School in Tennessee. "She cared so deeply [about people] and she loved children."

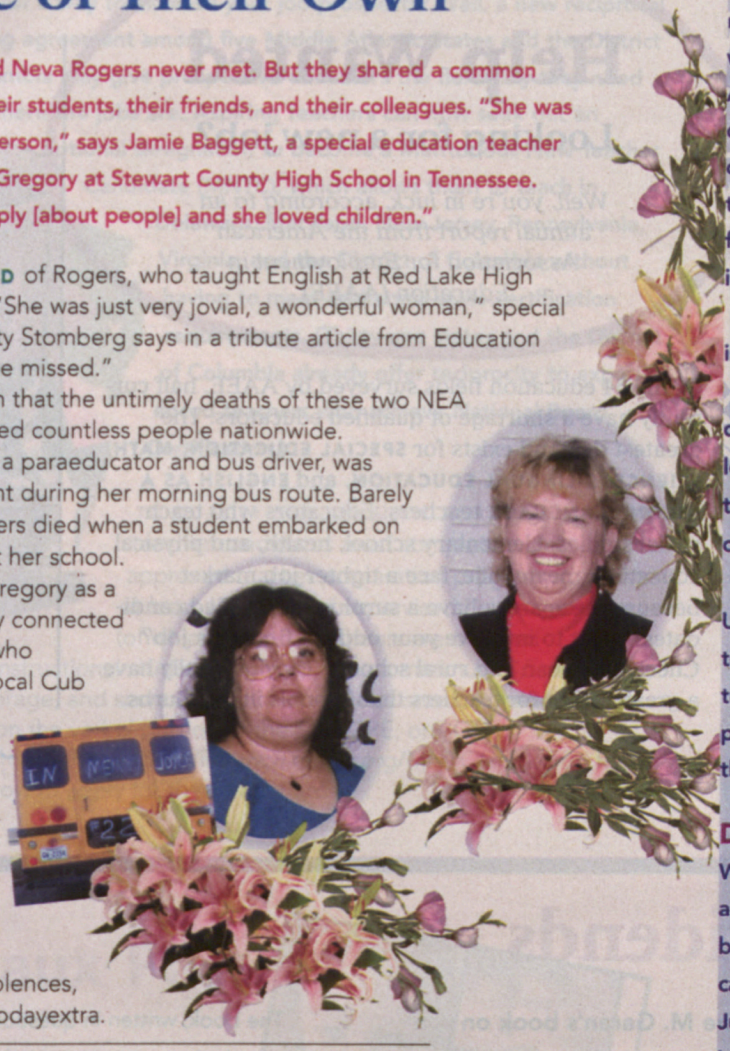
THE SAME CAN BE SAID of Rogers, who taught English at Red Lake High School in Minnesota. "She was just very jovial, a wonderful woman," special education teacher Patty Stomberg says in a tribute article from Education Minnesota. "She will be missed."

It's no surprise then that the untimely deaths of these two NEA members have impacted countless people nationwide.

In March, Gregory, a paraeducator and bus driver, was fatally shot by a student during her morning bus route. Barely three weeks later, Rogers died when a student embarked on a shooting rampage at her school.

Friends describe Gregory as a loving woman, strongly connected to her Christian faith, who volunteered with the local Cub Scout troop and youth sports teams. Rogers, meanwhile, loved to garden and bake and often brought fresh flowers and homemade cakes to school for her colleagues.

To send your condolences, visit www.nea.org/neatodayextra.



Joyce Gregory (left) and **Neva Rogers** died in March.

First Amendment's Last Stand?

Nearly half of **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** say newspapers shouldn't be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories, according to a recent University of Connecticut survey. More than a third think the First Amendment goes "too far" in the rights it guarantees. And while 97 percent of teachers and 99 percent of principals believe people should be allowed to express unpopular views, just 83 percent of students feel the same way.

Global Takes

AIDS in Africa

More than two-thirds of the nearly 40 million people living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa. Already, 11 million children have been orphaned by the disease, and that number is likely to grow to 20 million in the next five years, according to a report in *Education Week*.

Many teachers are succumbing as well.

Orphaned children and children with sick parents are much less likely to go to school, where they could learn how to stay clear of the pandemic.

Dr. Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, says canceling international debts, lowering Western trade barriers, and cutting drug prices could do more for Africa than aid from rich countries.

Dropping out in China

While China's cities are zooming ahead, rural areas are falling behind—economically, in health care, and also in education. Junior high school dropout rates in rural areas are rising to nearly 40 percent, reports *China Daily*. One Chinese education leader says family finances and student boredom both play a role. He says rural education should shift away from preparation for college admissions tests to focus more on preparing students for farm life.

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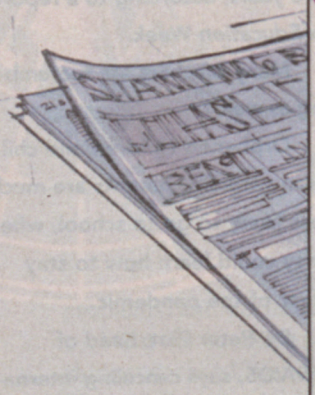
PHOTOS TOP: COURTESY OF THE GREGORY FAMILY, STOCKBYTE, JEFF VENIER; PHOTO BOTTOM: COMSTOCK

Help Wanted

Looking for a new job?

Well, you're in luck, according to an annual report from the American Association for Employment in Education (AAEE).

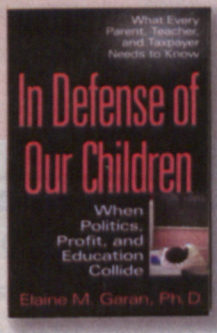


Of the 64 education fields surveyed by AAEE, half currently have a shortage of qualified educators. The greatest demand exists for **SPECIAL EDUCATION, MATH, SCIENCE, BILINGUAL EDUCATION,** and **ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE** teachers. Educators who teach social studies, elementary school, health, and physical education, meanwhile, face a tighter job market because these areas have a surplus of qualified candidates. Want to improve your odds of finding a job? Check out urban and rural schools. They generally have a greater need for teachers than schools in the 'burbs.

BOOK FOCUS

NCLB Dividends

You probably won't find Elaine M. Garan's book on President George W. Bush's reading list. *In Defense of Our Children: When Politics, Profit, and Education Collide* (Heinemann, 2004) could be the strongest assault yet on the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). The beneficiaries of NCLB, she suggests, are not the kids, but the companies that sell the tests and other services required by the law.


What Every Parent, Teacher, and Taxpayer Needs to Know
In Defense of Our Children
When Politics, Profit, and Education Collide
Elaine M. Garan, Ph.D.

Garan, a former reading teacher, takes aim at government-approved phonics and reading programs used to meet the NCLB requirement that methods be researched-based. She disputes the data used for these programs and says such "approved" strategies undermine teaching and learning.

The book, written in question-and-answer format, reveals which corporations are getting ahead in the name of school reform, while taxpayers foot the bill and many children are left behind.

Among the companies cashing in: CTB/McGraw Hill, publisher of standardized achievement tests; Voyager Expanded Learning, a provider of reading programs; and the Sylvan Learning Centers, which offer tutoring.

Garan opposes federal mandates on education including high-stakes testing. She cites data from the federally run National Assessment of Educational Progress that shows 21 percent of fourth graders and 20 percent of eighth graders "proficient" in reading last year—mirroring results from 1992. So much for the No Child Left Behind fast track.

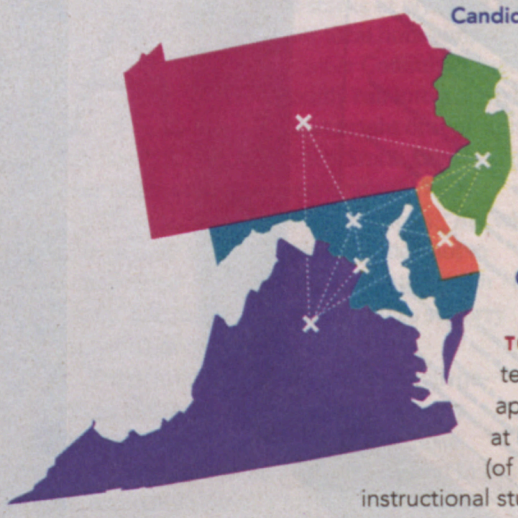
—Thomas Grillo

ILLUSTRATION TOP: PHOTODISC; PHOTO BOTTOM: HEINEMANN

Mid-Atlantic Mobility

First 5 Years

Looking for a way to increase your job prospects? Well, a new reciprocal licensing agreement among five Middle Atlantic States and the District of Columbia may give prospective educators the flexibility they need to go where the jobs are. Aspiring teachers can now seek out an optional designation to become a Meritorious New Teacher Candidate (MNTC), which allows them to teach in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia without having to meet additional state certification requirements. (Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia already offer reciprocity to experienced teachers who achieve National Board Certification.)



TO QUALIFY FOR THE MNTC DISTINCTION, teacher candidates must complete a state-approved teacher preparation program, complete at least 400 hours of supervised field experience (of which at least 300 hours are directed instructional student teaching), earn a minimum 3.5 cumulative grade point average, and score in the top quartile of students nationally on the Praxis II tests and on the verbal portion of the SAT, GRE, or ACT.

Want to see if you make the grade? Visit www.martp.org/MNTC/apply.htm for more information on how to apply for the distinction.

Photo Faux Pas

Early in my first year as an eighth-grade math teacher, we had picture day for the annual yearbook. During my planning period, I reported to the library (where the photos were being taken), signed up for a picture, received a slip for the photographer, and got in line. When I handed the photographer my slip, she told me to have a seat and asked me what grade I was in. I was so stunned that I just stared at her before asking if she was kidding. The best part? My students were having their pictures snapped at the same time. I got lots of laughs from everyone.

—AMANDA GILSTRAP
Auburndale, Florida

Two-Minute Tips

Homework Check

I have an easy way to take attendance and check homework at the same time. I print an 8 1/2 x 11-inch copy of my seating chart on heavy paper, like card stock. Then I staple or tape a write-on transparency over it. As I move around the room row by row, or group by group, I use a wet-erase marker to mark whether the students have their homework.

—JENNIFER ETSELL
Columbus, New Jersey

Bulletin Board Hint

Interesting and theme-related fabrics work great as backgrounds for bulletin boards. The fabrics don't fade and you don't have to throw away a lot of paper at the end of the year. Just fold up the fabric, store it, and use it again next year.

—SUSAN McCULLOUGH
Prineville, Oregon

Poster Storage

If you are looking for an inexpensive way to store your posters, try using the flat boxes that hold tag board. The boxes come in several sizes. Check with your office, art department, or other colleagues who purchase tag board to see if they have any extra boxes.

—MARY JO HENDRICKSON
Walnut Grove, Minnesota

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Next Step: College?

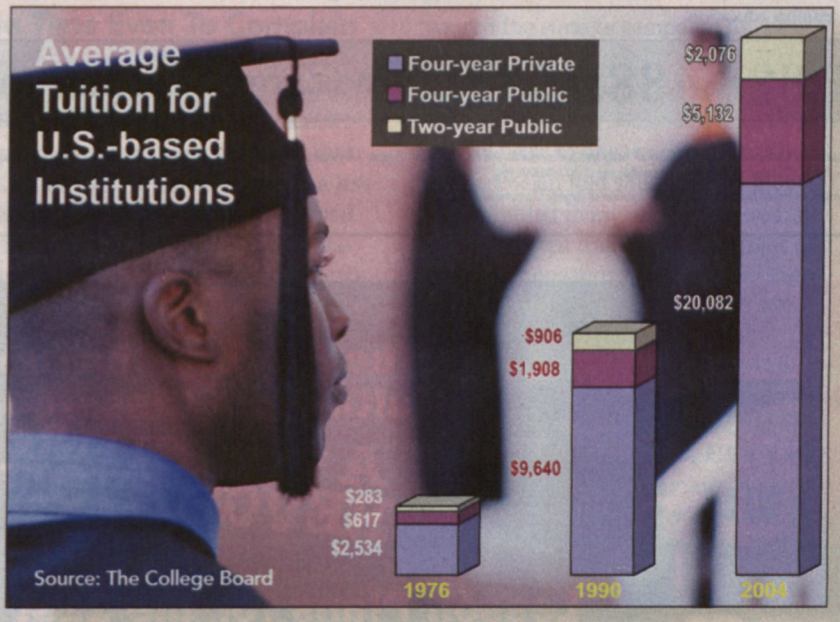
For many high schoolers, the answer is a resounding no—and not because there's not a will; there's just not a way.

Around the stacks of plywood and plumbing parts at her local home-improvement store, NEA Executive Committee member Marsha Smith recently ran into a former student—wearing that bright orange apron. And no, it was not flattering, not when Smith knew the girl could have been wearing a white coat or black robe.

"She was very smart," Smith sighs. "But when she graduated from high school, she had decided not to go to college—it was going to cost too much money. She just told me that she was so sorry she hadn't gone."

These aren't easy times to be a college-bound kid—and it's not because of those Chihuahua-sized dorm rooms. It's those husky-sized tuition bills that are getting in the way. One year at a private college averaged $20,082 in 2004, and that's not counting the price of room and board. At public colleges, the average price was $5,132, up more than 10 percent from last year.

"Some parents recently told me that the only way they were going to be able to send their child to school was to refinance their house," Smith says. "What we have are students who are able to go to school and families who want to send them—but they need assistance." That's why students depend on a variety of sources to pay the bills: Mom, Dad, and frequently, especially for students from poor homes, the federal government. Unfortunately, the pace of government aid hasn't kept up with the escalating college costs—and President Bush's proposed federal budget would make it even worse for the neediest students.



The cost of a college education has sharply increased since the mid-1970s, a trend that makes it difficult for many students to scrape together tuition.

THE RISING COST OF COLLEGE

The budget calls for an increase in funding for Pell Grants, which range in value from $400 to $4,050 and don't have to be repaid. Under Bush's proposal, the maximum ceiling would be raised by $100 a year until it reaches $4,550 in 2010. But the grants don't stretch as far as they used to, and the extra $100 won't nearly make up for the cuts that Bush also is proposing.

For example, Bush would kill the $66 million Perkins Loan program, which provided an average $1,800 to more than 673,000 students last year. At the same time, the President would wipe out Upward Bound and Talent Search, two venerable programs that help low-income kids prepare for college.

NEA leaders, including Smith, are working hard to make sure that doesn't happen. "All high school graduates should have access to higher education, regardless of their family income—no ands, buts or maybes," says NEA President Reg Weaver. "All students deserve to go as far as their talents will take them." And so this spring, as Congress works to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, the NEA and AFT are asking legislators to:

- ensure that the neediest students get sufficient federal aid;
- stabilize Pell Grant funding and restore its purchasing power;
- address working and non-traditional student needs, such as child care;
- use a variety of approaches, including direct lending, fixed-rate loan consolidations, and Perkins Loans;
- ensure that students aren't excluded because of their (or their parents') legal status;
- broaden loan forgiveness for educators in high-need public schools to include all subject areas.

It's already difficult for students of color to "buck the system" that says smarts aren't cool, says Smith, who is Black. (She still remembers her teenage son coming home from school and in a moment of insanity, saying, "What, do you want me to be smart?!" Well, yes....)

But, after you've established that smart is cool through exposure to the highly educated world—a lesson taught to Maryland kids by Smith's late mother, also a teacher, who established an annual tour of Historically Black Colleges—it's really disheartening to have to dress those kids in orange aprons because they can't afford college, Smith says.

As a secondary teacher, Smith keeps in touch with many kids who don't go on to college. "Once they reach their middle 20s, they regret it," she says. "They compare themselves to their peers who went to college and they find they're in jobs that pay less money. They always say they never knew it was going to be like this....They're struggling every day."

—MARY ELLEN FLANNERY AND NANCY KOCHUK

PHOTO: PHOTODISC

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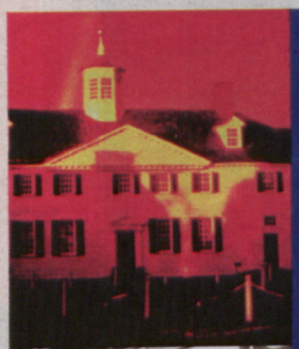

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A Bill of Goods, Not 'Rights'

OKLAHOMA The **Oklahoma Education Association (OEA)** is opposing a so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) under consideration in the legislature. TABOR initiatives, now being pushed by ultraconservatives in 13 states, usually call for both limits on state revenue—held to the rate of population growth plus the consumer price index (CPI)—and voter approval of all tax increases.

"Taxpayers have a right to know TABOR will mean drastic and painful reductions in government services and will lock public education in the cellar," stresses OEA President Roy Bishop. "It would be difficult to undo the damage the TABOR would cause in Oklahoma."

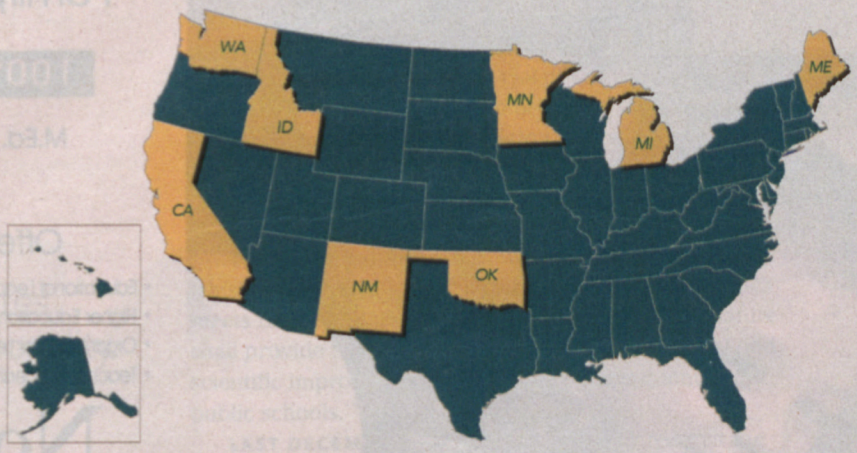
Connections, Not Quizzes

MINNESOTA On a frigid February day, **Education Minnesota** members rallied at the state capitol with parents and community activists—a bundled-up body 6,000 strong—to urge lawmakers to make public school funding the state's top priority. One speaker, Minnesota Teacher of the Year Tom Keating, questioned how the state can demand that teachers be held accountable while denying them the tools to do their jobs. "We need to make connections with students," he said. "Connections are the key to student learning, not quizzes!"

'All the Creativity is Gone'

MAINE State education authorities are hearing lots from educators about the downside of rigid state accountability and assessment plans: excessive paperwork, long hours, and the loss of "joy" in teaching. In one Nebraska hearing, a teacher reported that continual testing has "brought tears" to the eyes of elementary students. And way up in the Northeast, **Maine Education Association** member Steve Knight told education department officials: "We are setting one standard to cover an enormous range of kids. All the creativity is gone; there are too many meetings and assessments."

Maine Deputy Commissioner of Education Patrick Phillips has been listening. "The standards-based movement is not about more work for teachers," he acknowledges. "We need to stop doing some things; we need more time; we need a mid-course review."



No Time Even To Complain

WASHINGTON In a recent scientific phone poll, 70 percent of **Washington Education Association (WEA)** members reported concern over problems that take time away from teaching. In a less formal, targeted survey that followed, more than a few responses went like this: "Because of my workload, I don't have time to write out a story. Sorry."

The silver lining: Some WEA locals are tackling workload through creative bargaining. In Everett, for instance, the contract specifies limits on assignments for first-year teachers and requires that each newbie have three release days, at his or her discretion, for planning, observations, or work with a mentor.

A Pay Stub Says It All

NEW MEXICO **NEA-New Mexico** is lobbying for a living wage for public school employees. To drive the point home, Las Cruces paraeducators Terry Ybarra and Marcia Brown recently appeared before the House Education Committee, where Brown, a 16-year employee, testified that she earned $14,000 last year. And Ybarra, a 17-year vet, presented her biweekly pay stub—$231.72 after taxes.

"Is this a weekly salary?" asked committee chair Rick Miera.

"No, biweekly," responded Ybarra. "Last year, my take-home was $233.57."

"I had no idea. I didn't realize...," said Miera. *Now* he gets it.

Idaho Pay: Small Potatoes

IDAHO In February, **Idaho Education Association** President Kathy Phelan toured the state to campaign for passage of a Senate resolution to increase starting teacher pay to $35,000 and the average salary to $55,000 by the 2008–09 school year. In one event open to the press, Phelan told southeastern Idaho teachers that many professions requiring equivalent training and degrees pay "tens of thousands more" to start than Idaho's teacher minimum of $27,500.

Trouble for the Terminator

CALIFORNIA The **California Teachers Association (CTA)** is organizing on all fronts to oppose Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's "misguided agenda for public education." Besides calling teachers a "special interest" that the state must battle, the governor seeks to repeal the law voters approved to guarantee minimum funding to public schools. He also seeks to privatize teacher and public employee retirement systems, make it more difficult for public employee unions to get involved in politics, and undercut locally bargained contracts.

We Are Not the Problem

MICHIGAN Brace for yet more attacks on collective bargaining. At press time, an Ohio state senator introduced a bill to strip bargaining rights from public workers, while the **Michigan Education Association (MEA)** faced bills to stick public education employees into a state-run health plan and to prohibit bargaining over health benefits. "It's time to take the gloves off," says MEA President Lu Battaglieri, "and proclaim that public school employees are *not* the cause of the education funding problem."

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AHINT0505

The Right to An 'Adequate' Education

Increasingly, NEA state affiliates are challenging the constitutionality of school funding systems.

Fed up with chronically underfunded schools, NEA state affiliates, along with parents and school boards, are turning to the courts for help. And in increasing numbers, state courts are ordering their legislatures to spend more on public education.

According to the Advocacy Center for Children's Educational Success with Standards (ACCESS), school finance litigation has occurred in 45 states, and lawsuits are still pending in approximately 22 states, including new "adequacy" cases recently filed in Alaska, Georgia, and Nebraska.

Since the late 1980s, plaintiffs' arguments have focused on the "adequacy" of educational opportunity rather than "equality" of educational expenditures, and they have prevailed in most of these cases. According to Molly Hunter, director of legal research for ACCESS, plaintiffs have won 20 of the 26 "adequacy" cases. Detailed information about school finance litigation is available on the ACCESS Web site at www.schoolfunding.info.

Since 1987, at least 15 NEA state affiliates have participated in legal challenges to school finance systems in varying degrees of involvement, and NEA and its affiliates have spent more than $4.1 million on school finance litigation.

Judges Rule for Kids' Rights

Since July 2004, courts in at least seven states have declared their school financing systems unconstitutional. Some recent decisions:

IN FEBRUARY, A NEW YORK JUDGE ordered the state to provide an additional $5.63 billion to improve New York City's public schools. New York's highest court ruled in 2003 that the state had violated students' fundamental right to a "sound basic education" under the state constitution, and the trial judge issued the February order after the state missed a July 30, 2004, deadline for creating its own remedy.

THE KANSAS SUPREME COURT held in January that the state's school funding system violates the state constitution. The court, however, refused to order the state to appropriate a specific sum to cure the violation, despite a legislative study that concluded that an additional $800 million was needed. Instead, the court set an April 12 deadline for the legislature to act.

The court said that any new system the Kansas legislature devises "must reflect a level of funding which meets the constitutional requirement that 'the legislature shall provide for intellectual, educational, vocational and scientific improvement by establishing and maintaining public schools.'"

LAST DECEMBER, A TEXAS JUDGE declared that the state's system of school funding contravenes the Texas constitution's guarantee of an "adequate, suitable, and efficient education system." He gave the legislature until October 1 to come up with a new system.

THE MONTANA SUPREME COURT ruled in November that the state's school finance system "fails to adequately fund Montana's public schools," in violation of the state constitution. As in the Kansas case, the court declined to order a specific remedy, but left it to the 2005 legislature to fashion a solution.

LAST AUGUST, THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA agreed to settle a lawsuit filed in 2000 on behalf of California students who attend substandard schools. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the state agreed to provide almost $1 billion to ensure that students attend schools that are clean and safe, receive sufficient instructional materials, and are taught by qualified teachers. The settlement was to be presented to the court for its approval in late March.

ALSO LAST AUGUST, A MARYLAND STATE COURT JUDGE ruled that Baltimore school officials continue to fail to provide that city's schoolchildren with a "thorough and efficient" education as required by the state constitution.

AND LAST JULY, THE SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA affirmed a trial court decision that the state had failed to provide a "sound basic education" to students in rural counties.

ON THE FLIP SIDE, THE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS ruled in February that the commonwealth's system of school funding did not violate the education clause of its constitution.

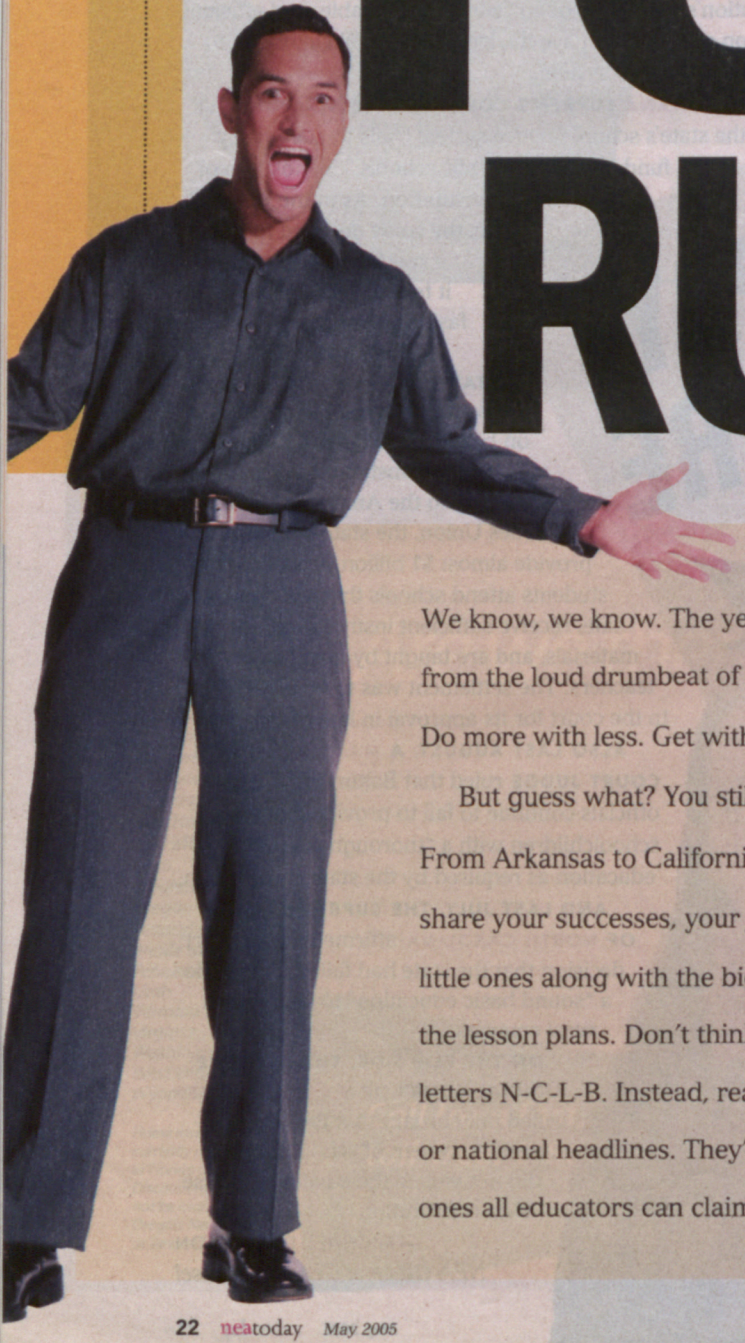
—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA Office of General Counsel

PHOTO: IMAGE SOURCE

GOOD NEWS

YOU RULE!

EDITED BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY



We know, we know. The year's nearly over and your head's still spinning from the loud drumbeat of demands: Test, test, test. You need improvement. Do more with less. Get with the program.

But guess what? You still rock—and so do your students. You told us so. From Arkansas to California, New Jersey to South Dakota, you wrote in to share your successes, your joys, your epiphanies—and they're awesome, the little ones along with the big. So take a deep breath and for a minute forget the lesson plans. Don't think about your salary, or budget woes, or the letters N-C-L-B. Instead, read on for the news stories that don't make local or national headlines. They're the victories of your colleagues, but they're ones all educators can claim.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Students Prove the Grateful Not Dead

Gandhi said it's the simple things in life that take your breath away.

As part of a research project for my master's degree, I led my students at Mitchell Senior High School in weekly gratitude journaling.

Every Monday, the "journalers" would record their personal thanksgivings. They started off with responses such as, "I'm thankful for family and friends." But, as the school year went on, their gratitude grew more reflective and more insightful. They wrote about long runs on cold days, the crackle of fire and the melody of falling water, and the glorious imprint of the season's first snow.

My favorites? The students who appreciated "warm chocolate chip cookies when the chocolate is still melty," "the ability to make decisions and learn from them," and especially the one who wrote, "I'm thankful for being thankful."

When the experiment had concluded, I found my journalists had grown more polite than the teens in my other classes. When I handed out Tootsie Rolls, I counted a greater percentage of "thank-yous" among my writers. And, while I don't know if they'll continue to journal, I do believe they'll continue practicing a new appreciation for the simple things in life.

AND, FOR THAT, I AM GRATEFUL.

—JOHN SOLBERG, PSYCHOLOGY, MITCHELL, SOUTH DAKOTA

Come Out and Play

There was a time, maybe 50 years ago, when the schools here in tiny, rural Riceville, Iowa, had a big, energetic parent-teacher organization. According to old news stories, the group's 300 members packed the school auditorium.

But by 1990, when I graduated from Riceville High, the PTO didn't even meet anymore.

And, by 1995, when I took charge of the school's 19 first-graders at Riceville Elementary, there wasn't much interest in resurrecting one. But boy, there was a need. Our parents needed support; teachers needed supplies; and kids needed a place to play. Where the school should have had swings and slides, there was just a great big slab of concrete.

So two years ago, a small group of parents and teachers resurrected the PTO and started an energetic fund-raising campaign. With a school carnival, we quickly raised $6,000 for basketball hoops. With a monthlong penny war, we raised another $3,000. (In the last three days alone, we raised $850. Kids just got wild when they learned the losing teacher would kiss a pig.)

By last July, we had raised $40,000—enough money for an 8-foot-tall play set, complete with double slide and climbing wall. Compared to what we had, it's like the Magic Kingdom!

Now, we're turning our attention to all sorts of new projects to benefit our needier children: Math Nights, mentoring programs, and more. This year, a first-place finish in the Scholastic National Scrapbook contest netted us $2,500 worth of books to share with Riceville's kids. We're struggling with declining enrollment, declining funding, lack of teachers...we're fighting the same problems that teachers all over are fighting, but the PTO really has been a bright spot in our day.

And if you could have seen the kids when they first climbed onto their new play equipment—it was phenomenal!

—TAMMI MUELLER, FIRST GRADE
RICEVILLE, IOWA

PHOTOS TOP: C SQUARED STUDIOS (COOKIES); AMBER WILKES
PHOTO BOTTOM: DIGITAL VISION

Small Steps for Eddie

Eddie came to me seven years ago, in a wheelchair at the age of 14. I looked right in his eyes and knew he had the potential to walk. Right then, I made a personal goal that Eddie would walk down the aisle for his graduation.

My colleagues thought I was crazy. If it had been up to him, Eddie would have stayed right where he was. The wheelchair was a security thing for him. But we got him up and getting stronger and, within a few years of entering our MOVE program, Eddie was able to take his first few steps independently.

Once he started walking, you could just see the pride in his face—pride in the fact that he could take himself anywhere, to the market, on errands around campus. When he developed double pneumonia for the second time, the hospital nurse told me that he probably would have died if he hadn't been walking.

By 2000, he was able to walk a full lap around our football track—without his walker—and he stopped bringing his wheelchair to school altogether. And then, last year, Eddie graduated from Miller High School. Not only did he walk down the aisle, he walked up the stage ramp and sat in his assigned chair all by himself.

I sat in the audience and cried.

—EILEEN ROSEMAN, DIRECTOR OF MOVE

(Mobility Opportunities Via Education) program at Joaquin Miller High School in Reseda, California (For more information about MOVE, go to www.move-international.org/about.)

So good, So good, You See!

Last year, the staff at Thomas Jefferson Middle School just didn't have enough time to put together their annual Dr. Seuss Green Eggs and Ham Breakfast—our traditional kickoff to a month's worth of NEA's Read Across America events. But this year, I said we were going to do it, come hell or high water, and this place was hopping for a good four or five hours on February 26.

We invited both the elementary and high school kids, served green eggs and ham, painted faces, told stories, and involved the kids in a cupcake walk—when they hopped onto a paper footprint with a book title, they got a treat to take home. Then, after breakfast, we gave away 1,000 books to the kids. Their eyes just bugged out—"I can take this? Really?"

We're already committed to doing it again next year, and we've already collected about 200 to 300 new or gently used books from the community. To me, reading is one of the most important things.

—BARB SCHWARTZ
INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN

PHOTO TOP: DIGITAL VISION (WHEELCHAIR)
PHOTO BOTTOM: OZAUKEE PRESS; PHOTODISC (EGGS)

Oprah and Me

I was driving home from school after a long day one Friday evening, when my cell phone rang. It was a producer of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*—and, as you can imagine, I had to pull over. I couldn't think straight to drive!

I had sent them a pitch about my life: teacher by day, businesswoman by night. Now, I maintained my composure and answered questions about my teaching experiences—working late hours, no overtime pay, underpaid, must I go on? She made no promises, but the following Tuesday I received "the call," and—wouldn't you know it—they caught me at the beauty salon.

A few nail-biting days later a camera crew visited my classroom at McGregor Elementary School to follow my steps at work. I told them, "Everybody on Earth has a purpose; mine is to help children have a better life." My students were so excited, and I'm thankful to God that they had this opportunity to be featured on the show. And then, the following day, my best friend, who is also a teacher, and I reported to Harpo Studios at 8 a.m.

The show that day profiled five teachers at work (including other NEA members Patricia Alonso of Vermont and Stephen Flowers of Illinois). And then—surprise!—Oprah shared with us her favorite things: a trip to an Arizona spa, a state-of-the-art washing machine, a new laptop computer, and other gifts worth about $15,000 total!

I think it was my story that first caught their attention. In my application, I shared a recollection of my first day on the job, more than 25 years ago, when my little blonde-haired, blue-eyed student told me, "When they told me you were colored, I passed out." And then he actually hit the floor!

I knew then that I had to be a role model for these children, and I am. It used to be that some parents wouldn't want an African-American teacher for their children—and now they ask for me.

Oprah asked me what I did when he called me colored. I told her, "I'm just glad he called me colored." Wow! Oprah, in the flesh, whispering in my ear, "DeLores, that was so funny. You are just awesome."

—DeLORES PRESSLEY
FOURTH GRADE
CANTON, OHIO

The Power of ONE

WE BEGAN OUR YEAR at Foothill Technology High School by focusing on these words from author Bryce Courtenay: "He had given me the power of one—one idea, one heart, one plan, one determination."

At our school, we aim to create citizens who feel empowered to make a difference in their world. To this end, all seniors complete special "hero" projects in the community. Usually, they go into it with a self-centered, "You want me to do what?" attitude. But inevitably, they look back and say, "I made a difference."

This year, after reading Courtenay's novel and then a newspaper account of South African children who can't attend school because they can't afford the $10 annual fees, each senior pledged to send one child to school.

Some sold bracelets or candy bars with messages on them. Others offered their used possessions at rummage sales. One young musician held a benefit concert. In all, our 112 students raised $3,006—enough money to send 300 South African children to school for a year.

We're so proud of this effort and blown away by the students' compassion and heart. And they're proud too. We have them come back and tell us, "I never realized how important one person was, or one gesture, until I did this project." And when they realize their own power, they keep making those contributions.

They make me cry every year.

—MELANIE LINDSEY
ENGLISH
VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

PHOTO TOP: KEVIN WHITLOCK
ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: CHAD BAKER/RYAN MCVAY

GOOD NEWS

The Light Bulb Goes On

I have a student who deserves special mention.

Last year, as a sixth-grader, this child knew just a couple of words. He could write dog, cat, mom, and his own first name, and his writing was large, shaky, and totally disregarded the lines. He could read only the same words that he could write, and he was still having trouble telling what F sounded like and what M sounded like.

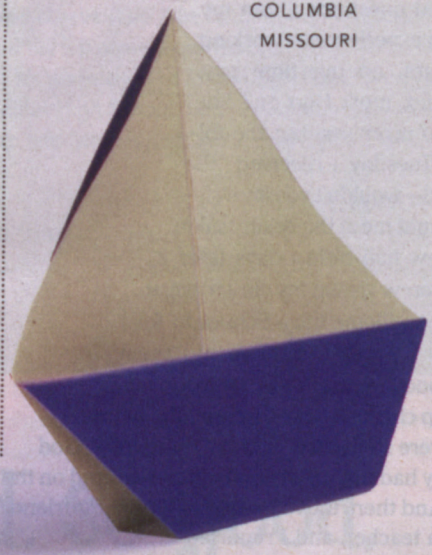
My instructional aide, Isabella Elbert, and I despaired. Even though he is mentally retarded, we had hoped to see more.

Then, in January we started a pilot program, the Wilson Reading System. In just three weeks, this young man, now a seventh-grader with us at Smithton Middle School, improved beyond our wildest dreams! He went from being unable to write a complete sentence to writing directions for making an origami boat: "You cut the black line, then you fold it into two halves. You take the design part on one side and fold it. Then you fold the other side. You have four rectangles..."

I had been working with phonemic awareness before, and it didn't seem to make too much of a difference. But this program presents it in a way they can understand: A, apple, ah; G, game, guh. You tap each sound off on their fingers, and we write the letter in the air or on their leg, and I think it's the kinesthetic learning that makes a difference with them.

It's just so exciting to see success in this child. He's trying, he pays attention, he's rarely in trouble. It's starting to click with him and I'm so happy.

—NANCY BRUNNER
SPECIAL EDUCATION
COLUMBIA
MISSOURI



My Own Best Student

If I see my Tuslaw High School students on the street five years from now, I think they will say, "I remember when we did that project...." I know I will. I've had the best journey with my students that I could ever take.

In my 10th-grade English class for special education students, in honor of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps, we read the novel *Night* by Elie Wiesel, an account of life in the camps through the eyes of a young Jewish boy. We completed reports and posters, clipped news articles, sharing information as we learned more. And then, in a culminating activity, we baked Jewish foods and hosted a guest speaker whose parents had been slave laborers at Auschwitz. The kids were just amazed—they couldn't believe something like this would happen.

One asked, "These were just regular Germans?"

I'm sitting here grading their history tests and the scores are just fantastic. The whole experience was so energizing—for them and me. Elie Wiesel said, "I am my own best student," and I love that quote. That's what this project turned out to be—for me and my students.

—SALLY GRAVEN
SPECIAL EDUCATION
MASILLON, OHIO

PHOTO TOP: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.
PHOTO BOTTOM: KEVIN WHITLOCK; ILLUSTRATION: MANDY PRITTY

CHESSMATE!

J.D. STARTED OUT LAST YEAR in our school-based alternative program, where I was an educational assistant, with bad grades and a worse attitude. But we talked a lot and he grew interested in my life, especially in hearing about how I was going back to school mid-life to get a college degree in education.

When I brought in my course work, he wanted to look at it. And when we played chess together, it hit me—this kid is really smart. He was always thinking three moves ahead of me! So, why was he so disrespectful? Why was he in alternative education? Why couldn't he bond with his peers?

This year, J.D. earned enough points to return to regular classes and he asked our counselor, Paula McCoach, if I could be his mentor. Every day, J.D. stops by my duty station to say hello and chat for a few minutes, and I'll give him little rewards, like a candy bar, for doing well or making good decisions. Mostly, I've just shown interest in him and his life. And now, he's in a regular classroom and on the honor roll! He participates in community activities, belongs to an after-school club that takes students to visit colleges, and he consistently demonstrates respectful and responsible behavior. There is no doubt in my mind that college will be in his future.

Our school, Pocomoke Middle School, is changing the lives of 25 students with our Learning and Mentorship Program (LAMP). Like J.D., most need a model to assist them in setting goals and changing their behavior—and pairing them with a caring adult helps them to be successful. With our help, all are making great strides!

I have a lot of respect for J.D.'s accomplishments—his life has been hard and nothing was handed to him. But I'm getting the best out of our partnership, feeling that I'm helping someone and knowing that he's going to be successful in school. He's a better person now. He can do it.

—LINDA KINHART, INSTRUCTIONAL AIDE
GIRDLETREE, MARYLAND

ENTER STAGE LEFT: A Little Fun, Finally

It's been so long since we did a spring play at Mill Creek Towne Elementary. When state testing came in 1991, it killed it. But our new test is given in March instead of May, and it dawned on us that we could bring the play back.

Everything from the first day of school is geared to the test. But from March to June, everything is geared to the play and the fun comes back to third grade. It's marvelous. Everybody has a part—if we have too many kids, we just write some more parts. What this does for their self-esteem!

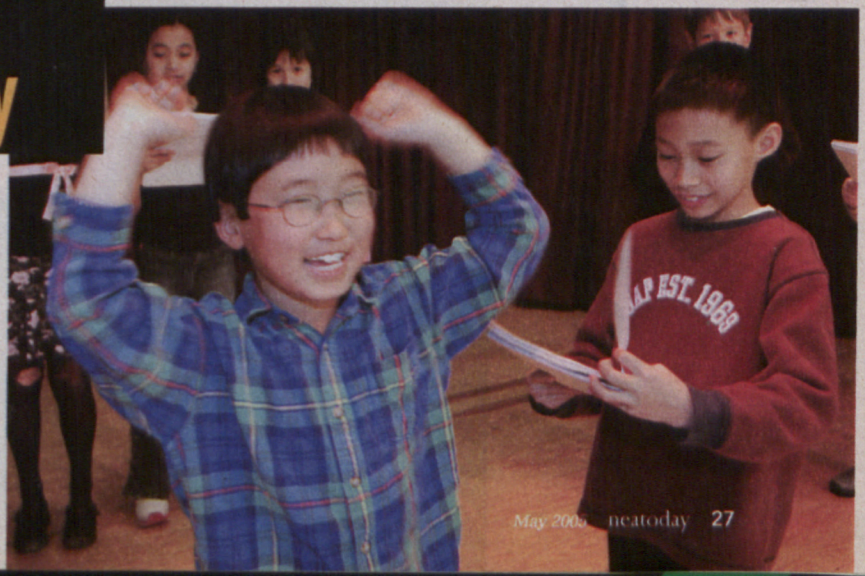
Best of all, it just unites the school. The parents chomp at the bit to get involved with costumes, props, everything. Our art teacher is involved—last year, he had kids painting scenes like French impressionists. And, of course, our music teacher is involved because the play is a musical.

We found a company that sells music, lines, everything already integrated with our curriculum objectives. Last year, it was a science play, but it's always about oral presentation and language skills, as well as art and music. This year, the play is a riot. It's about testing! We sing "Breathing in Deep" and "Follow the Directions."

Last line, Scene One: The kids are outside, the teacher is missing, the principal is having a heart attack, and one of the kids says, "C'mon, let's face this test together. I don't want any child left behind!"

The play is wonderful, but the big deal is what the play does for you. Our kids are giving up recess for three months to work on this—but it is like the light in third grade.

—MARILYN GRABER
THIRD GRADE
GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND



PHOTOS TOP: DEREK P. REDFEARN (BACKGROUND); CHARLES VOTAW
PHOTO BOTTOM: SANDY SCHAEFFER

You're Invited To...

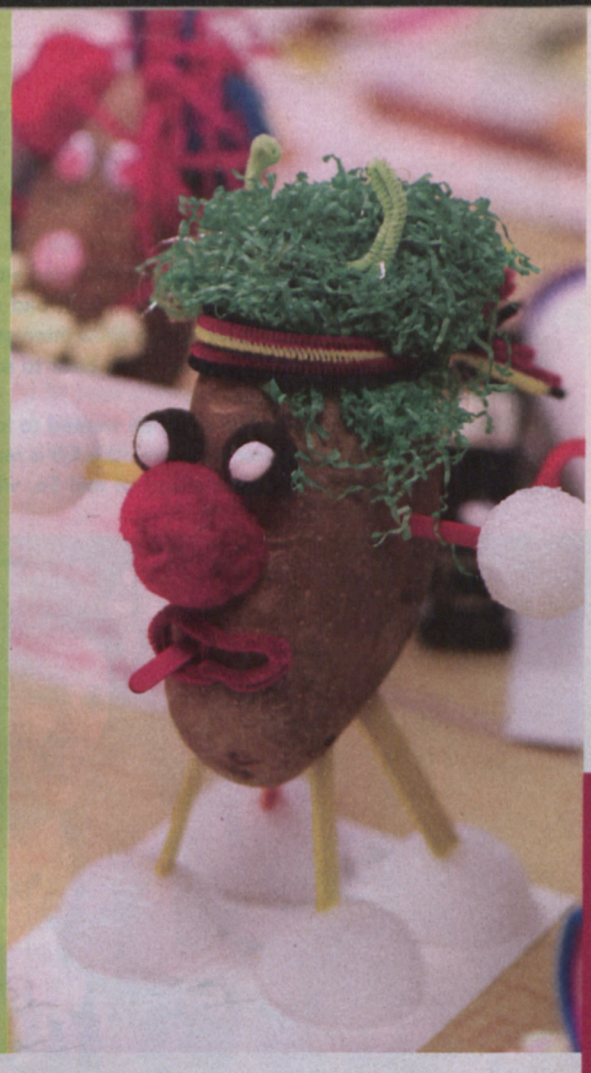
I don't understand this, because I've never felt this way, but there are some people who are afraid to come into an elementary school! Maybe because of something that happened in their past, they feel intimidated on our campuses—by the teachers, by the principal. So, we need to coax them in, in a non-intimidating, non-frightening way, and make them feel welcome.

Last year, after attending an Effective Schools conference, I was just fired up to find that way! So we at Burlington Elementary School created "Family Fun Nights" to bring educators and parents together in a fun, friendly way. As a parent myself, I know it's important to have parent involvement—and it's so important to know who your children are hanging out with and who their parents are.

Once a month, starting with kindergarten and ending with third grade, families get together in the gym for a potluck dinner. After the meal, college students take care of siblings while teachers and parents work with the children on school-related activities and projects in the library. (One fun night we made hilarious "potato people.")

Last year, we had 80 percent or better attendance at every event. The parents had fun and the kids had fun. I'm so proud of it!

—KATHY BOEHLER, SECRETARY
BILLINGS, MONTANA

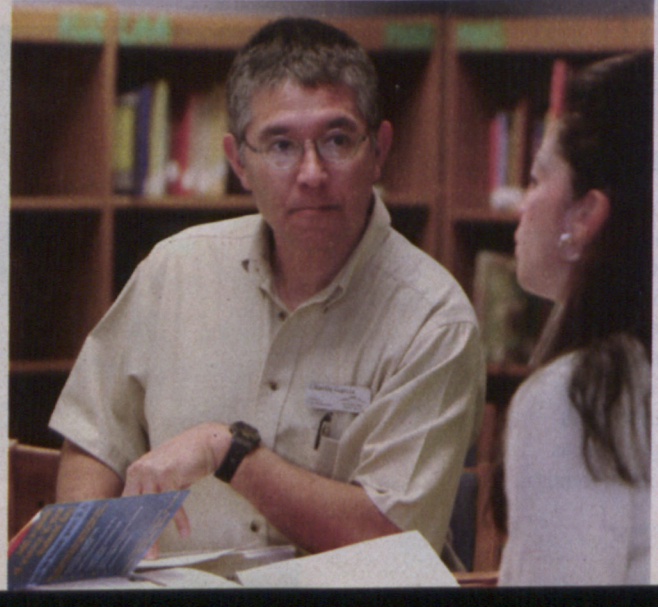


Food for Thought

I'VE ALWAYS HEARD BREAKFAST IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL—well, it is served beautifully at Erie Elementary. On the menu: student achievement. And at the table: teachers and administrators from every level sharing strategies as if they were recipes. What should be taught? How do we know students understand? What can we do when they don't understand?

At morning gatherings on alternating weeks, classroom teams get together, and then vertical teams representing every grade level, plus counselors and specialists. There is a place set for everybody.

After 28 years of teaching, I still get excited, but this new approach—called the Professional Learning Community—is really uplifting. It's giving teachers a chance to talk as practitioners, an idea which is often overlooked. We share samples, strategies, light bulbs that go off. And it comes right out of our classrooms—"What are you seeing? What are the trends? How can I help?"



The dialogues have been so rewarding. The things that I hear other teachers are doing are just fascinating—and the collegiality! It's just marvelous, as much as meetings can be.

We return to our classrooms with our minds full.

—CHARLES GARCIA
FOURTH GRADE, ERIE, COLORADO

PHOTOS TOP: KYLE BREHM
PHOTO BOTTOM: RICHARD HARO

I'm gonna learn how to fly!

Surrounded by abandoned houses, crack dealers and prostitutes, the Creative Arts High School in Camden, New Jersey, might seem more like bad news than good. But this is a place where teachers are energized; students are achieving; and dreams are really coming true.

The magnet school, which opened its doors in the inner-city in 1999 with just 53 ninth-graders, has grown to nearly 200 high school students. Almost all of them are sitting at their desks every day—we have a 98.6 percent attendance rate—but they don't sit for long.

They're on their feet to dance—the senior dancers performed at the Black Dance Conference in California in January, and many are performing in a spring production of *Dreamgirls*. And they're on their feet to sing—Grammy Award winner Jill Scott visits throughout the year to participate in programs.

We're driven by Principal Davida Coe's vision of creative success and energized by our own hard work and results. Creative Arts High students are winning essay contests, piano competitions, voice contests, art gallery exhibitions, fashion shows, and jazz festivals, here and around the world. And then, when they're done climbing those mountains, our students are off to colleges all over the country, where 90 percent of them win scholarships.

Yes, all of the students at Creative Arts High achieve success, despite living in the most dangerous city in America. Our high school is like a diamond in the rough. Our students are strong, intelligent, and shine with their talents for the rest of their lives.

WE'RE SO LUCKY TO HAVE LIVED THIS DREAM.

—SALLY HOLLAND, SITE COORDINATOR
CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY

Hodja and His Students

NASR-ED-DIN HODJA was bringing the village's nine donkeys back from the mill one afternoon, and he was very pleased with himself.

Idly, he counted them. One, two...eight!? Oh no! He slid off his donkey's back, looked behind rocks and over hilltops, but couldn't find the stray. At last, he stood by his donkey and counted again. Nine! What relief. He went singing along, through the trees, until it was time to count again.

Oh, no—not again! Were the donkeys bewitched? His friend, Mustapha Effendi, approached and the Hodja begged him, "Have you seen a donkey? First, there are nine. Then there are eight. Then nine again!"

"Let me see you count the donkeys," Mustapha ordered.

"One, two..." the Hodja counted, pointing at each one, as he counted up to eight. But his terror turned to amazement when Mustapha began to laugh.

"Oh, Hodja! When you are counting your brothers, why, oh why, do you not count the brother on whom you are riding?"

The moral of the story: Work carefully and accurately—a good lesson for students about to take the Missouri Assessment Plan.

In my classroom at Francis Howell North High School, I told a story a day to my juniors, beginning the week before the Missouri Assessment Plan. From my friends on an international storytelling e-mail list, I selected stories of hope and acceptance, finding good in difficulties, and working for one's own reward.

I think it did give students a positive focus and a chance to receive gentle advice. If nothing else, it gave everybody a chance to relax just a bit, and we all think better when relaxed.

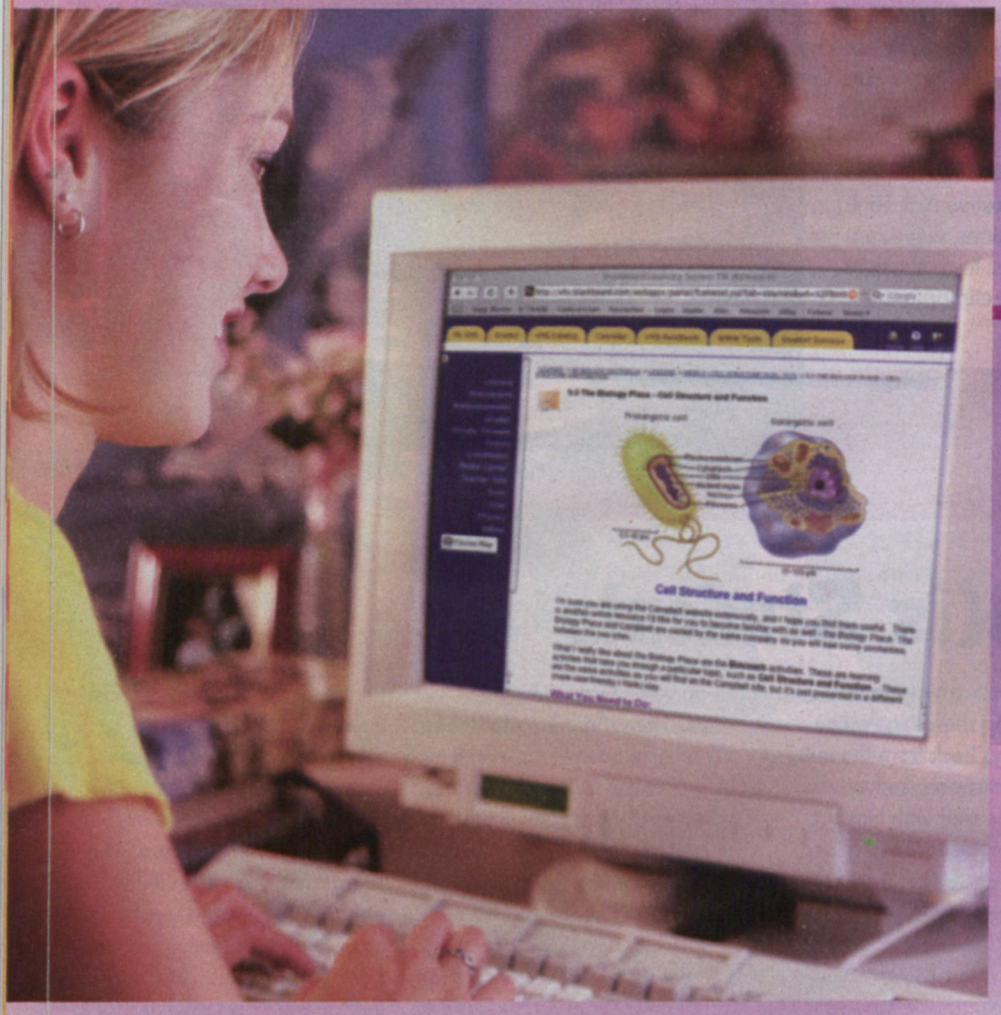
—MARY GARRETT
LANGUAGE ARTS
ST. PETERS, MISSOURI

PHOTOS TOP: RACHELLE OMENSON
PHOTO BOTTOM: GK HART/VIKKI HART

Log In and Learn

Online courses are becoming a growing option for students, but experts caution moderation.

BY KAREN NITKIN



Jessica Brown, a junior at West Chester East High School in West Chester, Pennsylvania, decided to challenge herself this year by taking Advanced Placement biology.

Small problem, though. Her school didn't offer the course, a demanding college-level walk through the mysteries of DNA and photosynthesis.

Not to worry. Brown discovered the Massachusetts-based Virtual High School, which offers the course over the Web and added her to its growing roster of students who meet teacher (and classmates) online. Brown's "virtual" instructor, Laura Hajdukiewicz, teaches science at Andover High School in Massachusetts, but she could just as easily hail from the other side of the country.

Under the Virtual High School system, teachers like Hajdukiewicz lead one class online for students anywhere in the world, and in exchange, 25 students can take online classes and receive credit at their own schools.

While the vast majority of K–12 students continue to attend classes in traditional bricks-and-mortar schools, more are taking one or two courses from a growing list of providers like the Virtual High School, a nonprofit organization that offers more than 200 courses.

It's a system that increasing numbers of educators and students find attractive indeed. Recently, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that enrollments in distance education courses (which include both Web-based courses and older technologies such as two-way interactive video hookups) in public K–12 schools topped 327,000 in the 2002–03 school year. In urban and suburban districts, online courses have surpassed video programming as the top method of distance learning.

>> **41 PERCENT** of school districts planned to offer **ONLINE COURSES** in 2004–05.

Source: QED

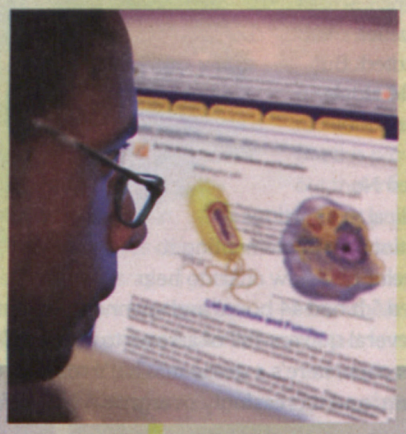
FLEXIBILITY A PLUS

Advocates of distance learning say online courses, though not a replacement for traditional classrooms, offer some pluses.

Flexible scheduling tops the list, says Bruce Friend, chief

PHOTO: PHOTODISC; PHOTO COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

administrative officer for the Florida Virtual High School, which has seen enrollment jump from 77 students when it launched in 1996–97 to more than 18,000 students this year. Many high achievers, especially in small districts, may be ready to take advanced or specialized courses their local schools simply don't provide, Friend points out. Other students take a course online because they need to make up a class, or their overstuffed schedules require them to take classes outside regular school hours. "One of my first students was very involved in student government and in band, and he was on the soccer team," says Friend, who taught before taking the administrative position. "And—oh yeah—he needed to take U.S. government in order to graduate." By taking the course online, "he was able to do them all."



Ruth Adams, a former teacher and contract negotiator for the Massachusetts Teachers Association who now serves as dean of students at the Virtual High School, believes that students taking courses online hone their ability to work independently and manage their time. Students in regular classes learn these skills, too, but when you're taking a Web-based class, "There's nobody standing over you making you sit down and do your work," she says.

Teaching over the Internet is challenging, but Hajdukiewicz is creative about finding substitutes for hands-on lab work. Her students do a virtual pig dissection instead of the real thing, and learn to classify cells without looking through a microscope. "Doing it online is not going to give them the same experience, but for some students it's the best they've got," she says.

STEADY DOES IT

Kids and teachers who take advantage of this virtual learning are definitely connected—by their mouses and Internet hookups—but are they really, well, connected?

While supportive of distance learning's potential to expand opportunities for students and staff, a 2002 NEA policy statement notes that face-to-face opportunities are critical, too. NEA's statement advised against arrangements in which students "receive all or most of their education at home through distance education and rarely convene in an actual school building."

Even supporters of online education are troubled by the growth of "cyber-charters." These are virtual schools that students attend full time, under existing state laws for charter schools. Some of the schools are run by for-profit businesses; many of the customers are home-schooled kids taught by their parents, rather than a certified instructor, notes Barbara Stein, a technology expert with NEA.

Schools such as the Massachusetts-based Virtual High School, though, use certified teachers with special training in online delivery, and they take steps to ensure that students stay connected. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, students are limited to two online courses per semester, says Adams. And Hajdukiewicz says that online courses "are more interactive than many believe." Her students cooperate on lab work, work on presentations together, and have "heated debates" that transcend distance.

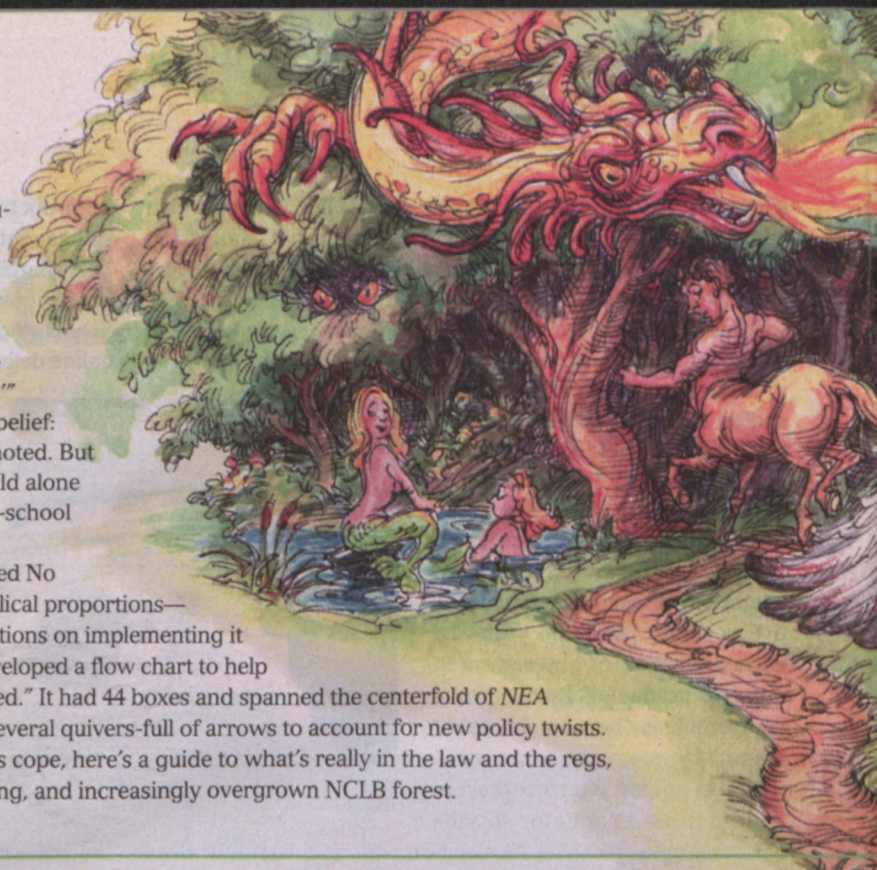
Before Christmas break, Hajdukiewicz faced one of the toughest tests of classroom community: One of her cyber-students, Angie, was killed in a car accident. She had to break the news to her other pupils by posting an announcement on the class page, and she created a discussion thread so students could reflect and react. Though separated by distance, the kids bonded. Said one student's post: "Reading about Angie really slowed down the cadence of life, and made me appreciate many of the smaller things. Until now, I guess I thought of everybody (including myself) as a name on a list.... [B]ut Angie's death has made the entire class so much more human to me." Adds Hajdukiewicz, "That definitely made the class seem more real to me as well." nea

NEED GUIDANCE?

Link to **www.nea.org/technology/onlinecourseguide.html** for a copy of NEA's "Guide to Online High School Courses."

Through an online course offered by Virtual High School, Massachusetts AP biology teacher Laura Hajdukiewicz reaches students around the country.

PHOTO TOP: PHOTODISC; BOTTOM: PATRICIA McDONNELL; PHOTO COLLAGE: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.



Last fall as school opened in Hartford, Connecticut, a *Hartford Courant* reporter asked parents what they thought of No Child Left Behind. "It's the worst thing that could have happened," said one. "All summer, I was hearing from kids that they don't have to go to school because there's 'No Child Left Behind.'"

That turned out to be an astoundingly common belief: "No Child Left Behind" means every child gets promoted. But one parent thought it meant you can't leave your child alone on the street. And another figured it mandated after-school supervision—no more latchkey kids.

It's easy to understand the confusion. The so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) is a tome of almost biblical proportions—300,000 words spanning 1,100 pages. And the regulations on implementing it grow all the time. Consider: Two years ago, NEA developed a flow chart to help educators find out whether they were "highly qualified." It had 44 boxes and spanned the centerfold of *NEA Today*. This year's chart has 65 boxes connected by several quivers-full of arrows to account for new policy twists.

So with an eye toward helping puzzled educators cope, here's a guide to what's really in the law and the regs, and what merely are mythical beasts in this perplexing, and increasingly overgrown NCLB forest.

No Child Left Behind—Myth or

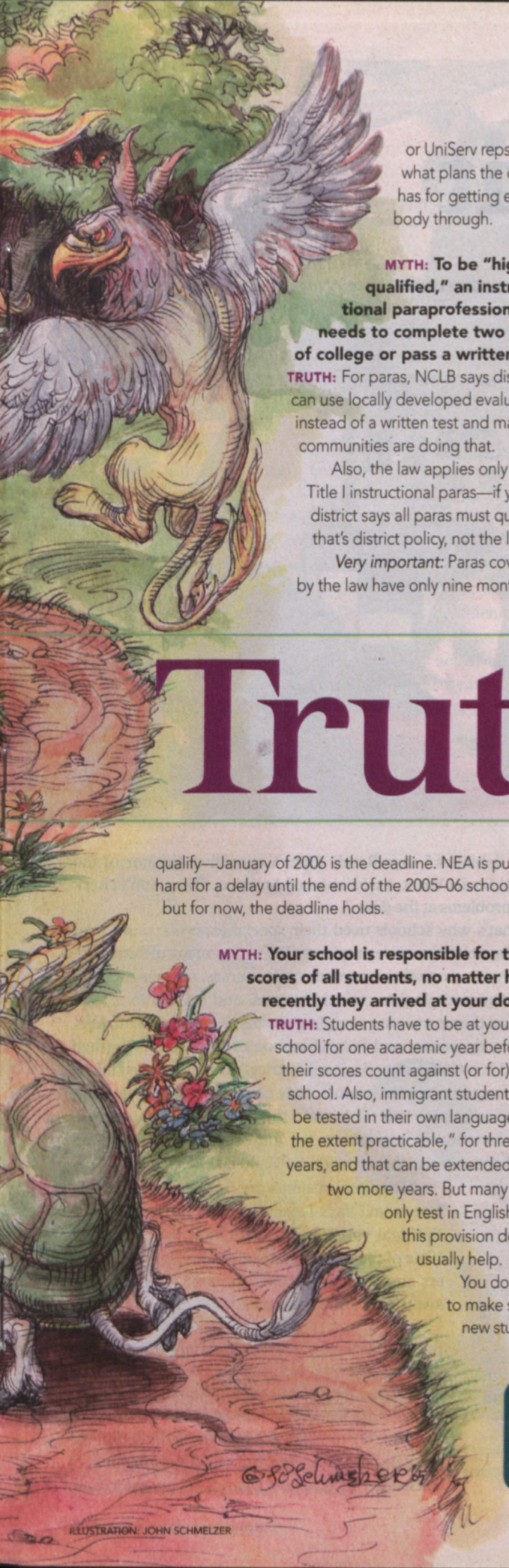
MYTH: NCLB is a state law.
TRUTH: It's federal. States choose the tests and have some leeway in implementation, but the law is federal and many crucial details are completely out of the hands of state and local education officials. Fact is, NCLB represents a major new departure from a long history of local-based control over key education decisions.

MYTH: If your school doesn't make adequate yearly progress (AYP), you're doing a bad job.
TRUTH: Many excellent schools don't make AYP. Two-thirds of schools that merited an A from the Florida state accountability system were not "adequate" according to NCLB. Across the continent, 403 California schools that achieved twice the state's growth target were branded not "adequate" under the federal law. Schools can be flunked for many reasons that have nothing to do with the quality of instruction—if fewer than 95 percent of any subgroup of students take the test, for instance.

MYTH: To be "highly qualified," teachers must have a degree in their field or pass a test.
TRUTH: Almost all states now use an alternative procedure in the law called "High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation" or HOUSSE.

Most state HOUSSEs are similar. California's is typical. Teachers need 100 points to be qualified. Up to 50 can come from years of teaching, 10 points per year. The rest can come from college courses, professional development, classroom observations, or other evidence of competence in the classroom, as well as professional leadership, such as being a mentor—or a union leader. No written test is required for teachers with 100 points.

Very important: The law gives most teachers only until the end of the 2005–06 school year to become highly qualified, so if you haven't jumped through this hoop yet, contact your union leaders



Truth?

An educator's guide to some of the things people 'know' about the federal law that just aren't so.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN AND DAVE WINANS

or UniServ reps to see what plans the district has for getting everybody through.

MYTH: To be "highly qualified," an instructional paraprofessional needs to complete two years of college or pass a written test.
TRUTH: For paras, NCLB says districts can use locally developed evaluations instead of a written test and many communities are doing that.

Also, the law applies only to Title I instructional paras—if your district says all paras must qualify, that's district policy, not the law.

Very important: Paras covered by the law have only nine months to qualify—January of 2006 is the deadline. NEA is pushing hard for a delay until the end of the 2005–06 school year, but for now, the deadline holds.

MYTH: Your school is responsible for the scores of all students, no matter how recently they arrived at your door.
TRUTH: Students have to be at your school for one academic year before their scores count against (or for) your school. Also, immigrant students can be tested in their own language "to the extent practicable," for three years, and that can be extended for two more years. But many states only test in English, so this provision doesn't usually help.

You do have to make sure new students take the math test because their attendance counts toward a school's required 95 percent attendance. But they don't necessarily have to pass the math test, and they can be excused from taking the reading test.

MYTH: High schools must turn over to military recruiters the names and contact information of all enrolled students.
TRUTH: Parents have the right to tell schools not to give their children's names to the military.

Buried deep within NCLB is Section 9528, which puts a school district at risk of losing NCLB funding if it doesn't give military recruiters home contact information for secondary school students. But this provision also allows parents to tell the district not to give out that information. And it requires districts to notify parents of this opt-out provision.

The law does not specify how parents are to be informed. Should it be in the student handbook, which few parents read, or somewhere more visible like the report card or the emergency contact form? Some districts ignore the parental consent requirement or just post an obscure newspaper notice, according to Oskar Castro of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization that counsels conscientious objectors to the military.

One district that takes the parent opt-out provision seriously is Montclair, New Jersey, which has a "whole school" Section 9528 notification plan, starting with entering freshmen. Parents are told of their right to opt-out through home-school communications and then sent a reminder. After the most recent round of notices, Montclair reports that 92 percent of parents asked the schools not to give their children's contact information to the military.

MYTH: NCLB is here to stay. There's nothing we can do.
TRUTH: There's some room at the state level to make implementation more reasonable, and NEA state affiliates are working on that. The more state education officials and legislators hear from educators like you about what's really happening behind the schoolhouse doors, the more likely they are to use the leeway they have, and to push federal officials for more flexibility.

At the national level, Congress can make changes without waiting for the law to expire in 2007. NEA lobbyists and other friends of public education are working for common sense improvements such as letting schools broaden the law's one-size-fits-all, test-score driven definition of student achievement. Bottom line: Don't give up, get involved! Go to www.nea.org/lac/esea. nea

Heard some amazing myths of your own?
Share them on our discussion board at www.nea.org/neatodayextra. You'll also find NEA's new flowchart to help you figure out if you're "highly qualified," info on what NEA and others are doing to fix the law, and how you can help.

ILLUSTRATION: JOHN SCHMELZER

Taking the Hit

Social problems, budget cuts, and policy mandates are presenting tough new challenges to school service providers—and students are losing out.

BY MIKE TUCKER

Two years ago, school counselor Karyn Holt was doing what she does best—listening and advising, sorting out fights, boosting self-esteem, and generally making sure the students in her school district stayed happy and emotionally steady. Then the budget ax fell and Holt lost her job, but not the love of students who quickly let her know how much they still needed her.

"I will miss you dearly, Mrs. Holt," wrote one. "Every fight that has gone on in this school you have solved."

"You were the best," wrote another. "I've been to four different schools and have never had a counselor like you."

A few kids, a few problems solved, a few notes of thanks—Holt, who worked in the East Valley School District in Spokane, Washington, says she wouldn't trade the memories for the world. But now she worries about who's taking up the slack and helping kids who don't have anyone to "counsel them through difficult times."

SCHOOLS ASKED TO DO MORE

It's a question a lot of educators are asking as they ponder the burgeoning complexity of their students' lives—and, by extension, their own. Gone are the days, they say, when they simply taught the three R's, tended playground scrapes, and provided career guidance. Now they must grapple with a slate of problems taken directly from medical charts and police blotters—suicide, homicide, drug abuse, gangs, HIV, hunger, homelessness, and teen pregnancy. In addition, more students are in need of specialized physical and mental care before, during, and after classes.

"If students are from a healthy family they bring those strengths, and if they're from a dysfunctional family they bring those liabilities," says Randy Fisher, executive director of the School Social Work Association of America. "They don't check their problems at the door."

That's why schools need their special expertise more than ever, say related service providers (RSPs). But many of these professionals—counselors, psychologists, nurses, speech-hearing-language pathologists, social workers, and occupational and physical therapists—are sounding alarms over budget cutbacks, staffing decisions, and federal mandates they say have them buried in paperwork and school districts drowning in red ink.

Along with administrators, they cite the trickle-down effect of cutbacks from federal to state to local budgets and underfunded mandates imposed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the so-called No Child Left Behind law.

"The fiscal realities are there and we have to face them," says Leland C. Huff, president of the National Association of School Psychologists. "One of the things we constantly hear from teachers and administrators is to make the cuts as far away from the classroom as possible."

As a former history and English teacher, Regina Rossall says she understands the importance of retaining top talent in the classroom. But as an administrator, she knows matching budget to staffing is usually bottom-line toil.

"You try to make the best decision within the fiscal parameters," says Rossall, superintendent of Westside Union School District in Lancaster, Cali-

No Simple Life

ONE IN FIVE CHILDREN has a diagnosable mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder, says a U.S. Surgeon General's report on mental health. However, 70 percent of children do not receive mental health services.

SUICIDE IS THE THIRD leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds and the sixth leading cause of death for 5- to 14-year-olds. The number of attempted suicides is even higher.

NEARLY ONE MILLION children are homeless, according to the U.S. Department of Education, most of them preschool and elementary age.

PHOTOS TOP AND CENTER: STEVE SHELTON

fornia. But as with a business, she adds, "if you're not operating in the black, you can't continue for very long."

A BLOW TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Yet the consequences of understaffing or misplacing resources can be devastating for schools because RSPs are typically called on when problems, big and little, arise. Take counselors. Judy Bowers, president of the American School Counselor Association, says that, in reality, they don't just "counsel"; they act as teachers, mentors, even club counselors—and research shows student improvement in reading, math, and attendance when they're in the mix.

"The lack of counseling services interferes with student learning," agrees Ellen Dunn, a special education teacher in Fargo, North Dakota. "I've had students in the past who've had severe depression issues that obviously affected their academic performance."

Fisher, who worked as a school social worker for 31 years before heading the social work association, says, "In order for students to do well, they have to be together socially and emotionally." He says cutting service positions is "short-sighted because mental health services relate to academic achievement."

Yet, like other service providers, counselors often find themselves at the mercy of a district's financial bottom line. In other words, when the money is available, they work; when it's not, students and other educators are adversely affected. There is growing concern, for instance, about the challenges and liabilities of providing safe health care for students.

FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

"One of our biggest concerns is the increase in the number of children who have special health care needs—respirators, feeding tubes, diabetes, asthma, and life-threatening allergies," says Nancy Wells, an elementary school nurse in Dover, New Hampshire. "Are kids receiving safe care? Are school staffers doing something they may be liable for if something goes wrong?"

The answers are troubling. "There are large numbers of children without access to direct medical care," says Janis Hootman, president of the National Association of School Nurses. "Administrators want school nurses, but they are forced to choose between textbooks and health care."

Even when schools are properly staffed, service providers may be overused or misused. "All educators have experienced dramatic increases in their workload because of new federal and state accountability measures," says Patti Ralabate, a special needs expert for NEA. "The problem is far-reaching," she reports. "Working conditions for RSPs are horrendous in most parts of the country."

Kathleen Whitmire, director of school services for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, says her members have reported increased caseloads, inadequate therapy and office space, and a loss of materials and clerical support. "Many of them will experience burnout and leave the schools for private practice, clinics, or academia," she warns.

Despite the current situation, educators and administrators agree that students must be served. For Marie DiMatties, an occupational therapist for Pennsauken Public Schools in New Jersey, serving students means that therapists and other RSPs must be more "creative" during intervention, scheduling, and collaboration to complete their required tasks. Despite the added pressure, the 30-year veteran insists "my greatest joy is seeing a child become successful." nea

—WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY SABRINA HOLCOMB

Laura Jo Severson, a high school counselor in Seattle, Washington, talks with students in a construction technology class (top) and instructs students in a human resource management class (left). Bottom: School nurse **Nancy Wells** provides nourishment to a student via a feeding tube.

PHOTO BOTTOM: JODIE ANDRUSKEVICH

Get in Touch

American Occupational Therapy Association, www.aota.org
American Physical Therapy Association, www.apta.org
American School Counselor Association, www.schoolcounselor.org
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, www.asha.org
National Association of School Nurses, www.nasn.org
National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org
School Social Work Association of America, www.sswaa.org

OVER THE RAINBOW

Tired of tripping down the same old brick road? If your travel horizon is as flat and gray as Kansas in black and white, it's time to banish that wicked witch of a travel agent and upgrade your vacations to technicolor.

BY SABRINA HOLCOMB

Another frenetic school year is coming to an end, and you probably feel like somebody has dropped a house on you, too. But things are looking up, because *NEA Today* has found some fun and unusual vacation spots that give a whole new meaning to somewhere over the rainbow. No matter what your budget, a little imagination and information can go a long way. Tour www.nea.org/neatodayextra for specifics, but read on for ideas to get you started.

Life Is a Buffet

Food Fantasies

Sweet news, **chocolate lovers!** Somebody out there understands you because scrumptious, delectable, over-the-top vacations worthy of a true chocoholic really do exist. Visitors to the annual Great Chocolate Fest in New Brunswick, Canada, can compete in a chocolate-chip cookie decorating contest, a chocolate hand-dipping contest, and a chocolate treasure hunt. The American Club in Wisconsin holds an annual "In Celebration of Chocolate" event with a different theme each year because the chefs are not allowed to repeat a recipe.

Traveling by sea? *Chocolatier Magazine* sponsors special chocolate cruises that offer seminars on everything from chocolate sculpturing to the history of chocolate, and passengers on Norwegian Cruise Lines to the Caribbean can nosh on treats like chocolate pizza and chocolate sushi from an afternoon chocolate buffet. Then there's Hershey Park in Pennsylvania, where visitors can make their own chocolate products and the truly sybaritic can indulge in a chocolate spa with whipped cocoa baths and chocolate sugar scrubs.

AT HOME? Order chocolate products online for your own spa treatment. Get together with friends for a chocolate potluck and share recipes for chocolate appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM NUTTLE; PHOTO: BERIT MYREKROK

Vegetarians, are you tired of being an afterthought on the dinner menu? There's a cornucopia of options, if you just know where to look. The Vegetarian Resource Group in Baltimore, Maryland, helps vegetarians and vegans with their travel plans. Spiritual Guides' Vegetarian-Restaurants.net lists vegetarian restaurants and natural food stores in all 50 states, and VegDining.com has a world map of vegetarian restaurants. *The Vegan Passport,* published by Vegetarian Guides, explains in 38 languages, with accompanying photos, what vegetarians and vegans can and can't eat. **AT HOME?** Treat yourself to products from Fresh Body Market, a vegan line of skin products packed with real fruits and vegetables.

If you're looking for a combination **culinary & cultural** experience, you can visit the Food of the Gods Festival in Oaxaca, Mexico, for cooking classes, wine receptions, craft tours, ice cream and exotic fruit tastings...you get the idea. And if your favorite fare is traditional home cooking (called legacy cooking by food historians), there are "To Grandmother's House We Go" cooking tours through Mexico and Italy. **AT HOME?** Have relatives contribute to a family cookbook filled with recipes, photos, and journal entries, then pack the car for a visit to your very own grandma.

Call of the Wild

Adventure Quests

If you'd rather snowboard than surf and your idea of a "cool" vacation involves lots of snow and ice, you'll really be wowed by the Ice Hotel in Sweden. There you can have a drink in an ice glass at an ice bar, eat Lapland specialties on a plate of ice, and sleep on an ice bed. Or you can visit Norway's Alta Igloo, the

OVERLANDING "This past spring, my wife and I 'overlanded' our way from Istanbul—through Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and across Sinai—to Cairo, Egypt. Overlanding is a way of covering a lot of distance in a small amount of time for a reasonable amount of money. Ten of us traveled by truck. We each contributed $300 to a kitty that covered all our group expenses, and everyone shared the cooking and the chores. My chore was to unload the tents each night from the roof of the truck and repack them the next morning. Trip highlights included dawn service on a Gallipoli beach to commemorate the 1915 Allied landings, reading newspapers in the Dead Sea, snorkeling in the Gulf of Aqaba, and the famed hospitality of the people. Travel is what helps us see each other as humans in an interconnected world."

—JOHN AND ELIZABETH REINSBOROUGH, RETIRED TEACHERS

PHOTOS LEFT: CREATAS; RIGHT: GLEN ALLISON

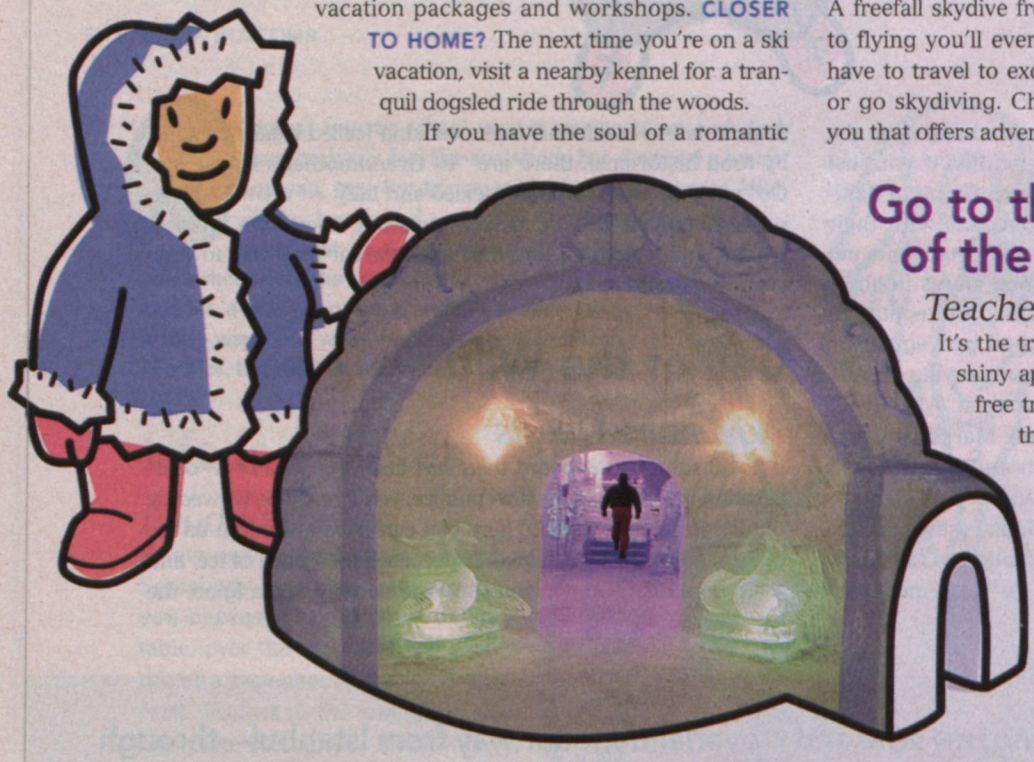
OVER THE RAINBOW?

world's northernmost **ice hotel,** where you can spend a night in an igloo village, see prehistoric rock carvings, and view the northern lights on an expedition to the North Cape. Not cheap, we know, but great specials for destinations like this abound online. **AT HOME?** To cool down in the summer heat, throw a skating party at the local ice rink complete with a snow cone machine and other icy treats. Better yet, try something new by signing up for skating or ice hockey lessons.

So you've been on a sled before, but have you been on a **dogsled?** If you're looking for a cool new ride, Alaska Dog Sledding in St. Michael specializes in small-group dog mushing trips into remote Alaskan wilderness, and Wintergreen Dog Sledding Vacations in Minnesota offers a variety of dogsled vacation packages and workshops. **CLOSER TO HOME?** The next time you're on a ski vacation, visit a nearby kennel for a tranquil dogsled ride through the woods.

If you have the soul of a romantic and a taste for the exotic, you may want to kick up a little dust on a **camel safari** in India's Thar Desert, where you'll explore palaces, ancient fortresses, and medieval cities. At night, you'll camp at an oasis, count the brilliant stars, and listen to the haunting music of a sitar. **CLOSER TO HOME?** You don't have to travel to India to ride a "ship of the desert." There are camel safaris in California, Utah, Nevada, Texas, and even Michigan.

If you need to get above it all, try **hot-air ballooning.** Balloon enthusiasts say that floating 500 to 2,000 feet above the ground is the perfect way to "travel." Want more of an adrenaline rush but still want to commune with the sky? Then **skydiving** is your sport. A freefall skydive from 14,000 feet is the closest thing to flying you'll ever experience. **AT HOME?** You don't have to travel to exotic locales to ride a hot-air balloon or go skydiving. Chances are, there's a company near you that offers adventurous souls a chance to soar.



Go to the Head of the Class

Teacher Specials

It's the travel industry's way of giving you a nice, shiny apple—lower prices, special packages, even free trips for educators. At the top of the list is the Educators Bed & Breakfast Travel Network, owned and operated by Norm and Hazel Smith, two NEA-Retired members who offer a fabulous service to traveling educators. For the incredible price of **$34 a night for two,** educators can stay almost anywhere in the world! How so? Members of the B&B Travel Network (more than 6,000 in over 50 countries) stay with other members who open

PET PICNIC "This summer, I'm flying from my home in Virginia to the small town of Roundup, Montana, for a very special weekend. A hundred people and their dogs are gathering from all over the country for a 'schipnic,' a schipperke dog picnic. We're all on a schipperke e-mail list, and I'll be meeting many of my 'e-friends' for the first time. I can't wait to see the beautiful countryside of Montana, eat an authentic Western meal from a chuck wagon, and watch a real cattle roundup in Roundup."

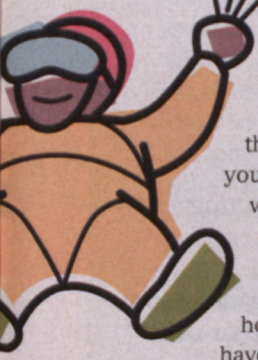
—LORRIE QUACKENBUSH, MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM NUTTLE; PHOTO LEFT: COURTESY OF DISCOVER THE WORLD LTD; PHOTOS CENTER AND RIGHT: DIGITAL VISION

their doors and spare rooms to fellow teachers.

Why should Ms. Frizzle and her Magic School Bus have all the fun? Your "ride" may not turn into a submarine or space shuttle, but you can still take advantage of **free, discounted, and low-cost vacation packages** available to teachers. You just have to do a little homework to find the one that's best for you. First, check with your state Association to see what travel packages it offers members—packages and discounts vary from state to state. Some companies specialize in affordable educational tours for teachers and students: Explorica, for example, lets teachers travel free if they lead a group of students, gives them bonuses up to $2,000 for leading a large group, and allows their family and friends to tag along at a discount.

Nature lovers, if you own a tent or an RV, you can **camp for three "free" months** at the John Pennekamp Coral State Park in Key Largo, Florida, where you can enjoy kayaking, canoeing, glass-bottom boat rides, snorkeling, and scuba-diving—all in exchange for helping to maintain the park for 20 hours per week.

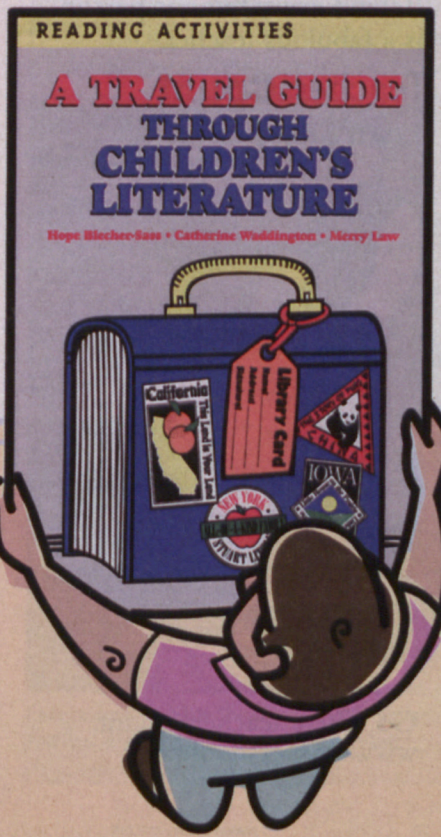


There's No Place Like Home!

Virtual Vacations & Other Stuff

No matter how far down the yellow brick road you travel, there's still no place like home. That's why the best vacation you have this year may just be in **your own backyard**—whether you're traveling from the kitchen to the outdoor grill or voyaging through virtual space. Just think: **virtual travelers** can tour exotic locales, chat with other "tourists," download pictures of their "trip" for the scrapbook—and still be home in time for dinner. High school teacher Rita Jo Swingle may just have the right idea. She asks: How about **Just Stay at Home** vacations?

"Most of our kids and families are constantly on the go. We're never at home to enjoy the fruits and labors of what we spend our working lives to build. How many historical sites or resort areas are right around the corner from your own home? How about picnics in your own backyard? What happened to badminton, family dinners, sitting on the back porch listening to crickets in the evening, nature walks, county fairs, fireworks, evening ice cream rides—or just enjoying home? This is the true vacation of the 21st century!" nea



Tour www.nea.org/neatodayextra for links to the "vacations" in this article and more travel adventures from NEA members.

BY THE BOOK "I read *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge* with my children and took them on a trip inspired by the book. We walked across the George Washington Bridge in Fort Lee, New Jersey, then sailed around the real lighthouse. That vacation led to my book, *A Travel Guide Through Children's Literature*."

HOPE BLECHER-SASS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Tony Shalhoub's acting teacher, Tom Power, was relentless.
His most meaningful lesson: "whether on stage or off, act human."
Behind every famous person is a fabulous teacher.

TeachersCount

Learn a thing or two.

Go where teachers count.
www.teacherscount.org

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It's Hard To Stick Around

The nation has a teacher retention crisis and the data prove it. One way out: a real voice on the job.

Twin Falls (Idaho) kindergarten teacher Debbie Soran has always loved her job. But when school's out in May, this 16-year veteran is leaving Sawtooth Elementary School—and teaching—for good, without the promise of a retirement check. Soran says she's simply lost both "joy" and her professional voice in teaching.

Unfortunately, Soran will join hundreds of thousands of teachers who University of Pennsylvania professor Richard Ingersoll says are increasingly saying good-bye to teaching—not because of the low pay that sends so many others packing, but because they believe nobody's listening to them.

Ingersoll, an associate professor of education and sociology and author of *Who Controls Teachers' Work?: Power and Accountability in America's Schools*, says "lack of faculty influence" over issues such as curriculum and discipline ranks high among factors driving ever more teachers to quit the profession before retirement age.

Soran had never been outspoken, she says. But in January, she experienced a double shock. After being run through a rapid succession of reading and report card tests, Soran's five-year-olds were hit with *another* reading test that Soran thought was "redundant."

The teacher told administrators that she had enough data, thank you, and wanted to teach, not be replaced by a substitute while she administered 20-minute tests, morning and afternoon, to 45 kids.

Soran's refusal earned her a two-week suspension and the threat of a termination hearing. But thanks to overwhelming parent support—they "hounded" the school board, Soran says—and support from the Idaho Education Association, she returned to the classroom.

But then Soran encountered Open Court, a scripted reading curriculum Twin Falls requires teachers to use—and one of many increasingly required by districts across the country to meet the demands of the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB).

That directive was, for Soran, the final straw.

When she had a voice in reading instruction, Soran says, she could "submerge" students in letters, introducing a new letter every week and a half. "But with Open Court we're not on any one letter for very long," she says. "I love kids; it's sad to lose a seasoned teacher over a reading plan!"

"A scripted curriculum removes teacher creativity," notes Ingersoll. "There's no flexibility involved; every kid gets the same. The catch is, of course, that kids are different and need different things, and the teacher—like any other professional—needs the discretion to decide what works."

Developers of scripted programs argue that teachers do have some discretion, but Soran and many others counter that it's just not enough, and say because of it, their roles as experts are undermined.

That debate continues to rage (see the February *NEA Today* cover story). But the fallout—educators throwing in the grade book—can't be taken lightly, warns Ingersoll and others who have documented the nation's teacher retention crisis.

In his research, Ingersoll analyzed data from the federal Schools and Staffing Survey, covering 55,000 teachers in 12,000 public schools, and noted a swift-moving "revolving door" that won't be slowed by recruitment schemes alone.

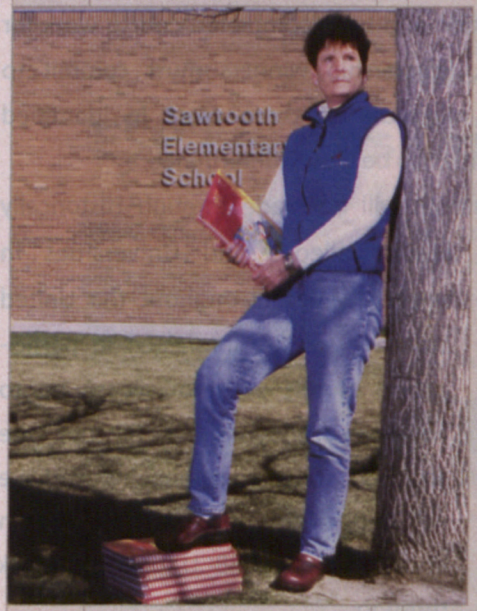
Ingersoll found that U.S. schools lose 40 to 50 percent of their new-teacher cadre in the first five years—a rate reduced greatly in schools with induction programs—and that more than 1 million teachers, almost one-third of the profession, are in "job transition" each year.

Top-down No Child Left Behind mandates might well be deepening the hole in some states, he says. "If we're going to meet NCLB's mandate for 'highly qualified' teachers," Ingersoll stresses, "we're going to have to fix school working conditions so the revolving door doesn't revolve so fast."

Educators must push harder, he says, for more administrative support, input in student behavioral issues, a "say in key decisions" and, of course, better pay.

—DAVE WINANS

For more on Ingersoll's work, go to **www.nea.org/neatodayextra**.



Idaho teacher **Debbie Soran** is quitting the profession. The final straw: a scripted reading curriculum.

PHOTO: PAM BENHAM

NEA Sponsors Teacher Surveys

In 2004, the North Carolina Association of Educators/NEA joined with Gov. Mike Easley to sponsor a large-scale survey on teacher working conditions—and document their direct link to teacher retention and student achievement. Survey results were so sobering that NEA is now working with the independent Southeast Center for Teaching Quality to run a similar survey in several other states. For more on the North Carolina survey, go to www.teachingquality.org.

The tom joyner Foundation

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Bowie State University, Bowie, MD
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Cheyney State University, Cheyney, PA
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN
Harris-Stowe State College, St. Louis, MO

NEA & Tom Joyner Foundation

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The Foundation and the National Education Association believe that pre-K through 12 curriculum should be taught by licensed teachers. We recognize that in certain urban, suburban, and rural communities not every teacher is licensed. In an effort to help teachers become fully licensed, the Foundation and NEA have agreed to join forces to assist teachers who desire to gain full licensure.

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www.nea.org/joyner

'We Want Some Kind of Say'

Arizona support professionals create a local from scratch. Their formula: numbers, leadership, and vision.

It's a Southern Arizona portrait: a mining town—San Manuel—with a closed mine and little to show but near-empty stores and $8-an-hour jobs. But look beyond the smokeless smokestacks of BHP Copper, once the nation's largest underground copper mine, and you'll see something truly beautiful: the Galiuro Mountains, the stands of cactus, and a rock-solid local community in which neighbors help neighbors in need.

There isn't an education support professional (ESP) in Mammoth-San Manuel Unified School District #8 who didn't feel the shock waves of BHP's abrupt shutdown in 1999, which threw some 3,000 people out of work. But this economic tsunami never washed away San Manuel's union tradition or its community spirit. Both live on in the Arizona Education Association's (AEA) newest affiliate, the Mammoth-San Manuel ESP Association (MSMESPA).

Like their resilient community, which has reinvented itself as a retirement destination, MSMESPA members have dusted themselves off and built an Association from nothing, independently of teachers. They organized last December, and by March MSMESPA was at 60 percent of potential membership and still growing.

The odds against success were high. Arizona's a right-to-work state, in which ESPs are legally "at-will" employees without the right of due process (an AEA legislative priority). Worse yet, at the beginning of each school year every San Manuel ESP must sign a "letter of intent" declaring that he or she can be terminated "with or without reason, with or without notice."

But MSMESPA members, who are fast approaching their first goal of formal school board recognition, have much going for them: guidance and training from AEA, a positive relationship with the administration, and assertive leaders with lots of vision. "We've been through a lot of insecurity in this town," says MSMESPA President Judy Dykes, a once-unemployed BHP Copper receptionist who became the school district warehouse manager. "We want to make an impact on our future, we want open communications and proper information from the district, and we want some kind of say."

Local Secretary Linda Corona, a transportation/maintenance department secretary, reiterates: "We'd like to establish a good working relationship with the superintendent and school board to make sure our members receive fair wages and working conditions."

This new NEA local affiliate is already down that road. Superintendent Ron Rickel invites MSMESPA input on concerns such as bus driver hours, and the school board now pays more attention to the issues of everybody from paraeducators to cleaning staffers.

"When we show up in big numbers at school board meetings," says Corona, "things aren't voted on so easily. They take a second look!"

—DAVE WINANS

San Manuel's copper mine (background) may be closed, but the union tradition lives on in a brand-new ESP local headed by **Judy Dykes.**

ESP Leaders Drive Arizona Growth

The Arizona Education Association (AEA) is one of 32 NEA state affiliates that have seen ESP membership growth over the past year. In fact, NEA has 16,000 more ESP members than last year, for a total of 370,000.

AEA does its share by devoting extensive resources to ESP organizing, an effort steered by an ESP Organizing and Leadership Development Task Force and funded in part by a $15,000 grant from NEA ESP Quality.

"We have targeted seven local affiliates for assistance that have a strong core of leaders and, based on task force-developed criteria, are most likely to achieve success," points out task force chair Andrea Haber.

San Manuel leaders from left: **Sharon Hogan, Linda Corona, Oscar Renteria,** and **Judy Dykes.**

Results so far include expanded ESP locals, a brand-new affiliate (Mammoth-San Manuel), and even top-notch bargaining agreements in the Paradise Valley and Phoenix Union school districts (Phoenix Union ESPs recently negotiated a 6 percent raise).

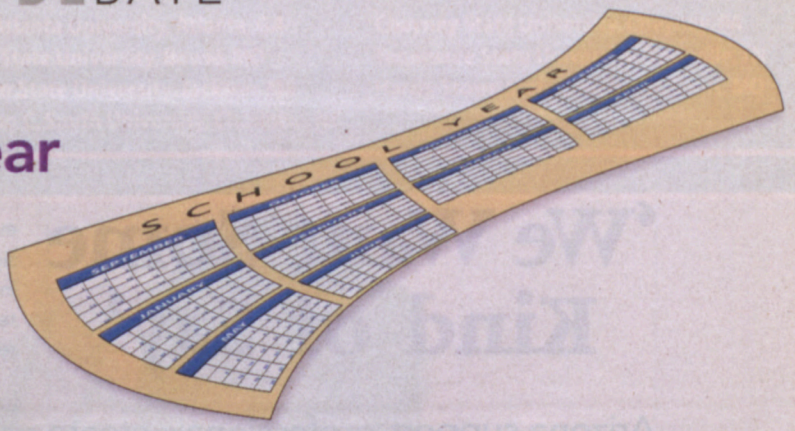
"I'd put these two agreements up against any ESP contracts across the country," boasts Haber. "Where we have good, visionary local leaders, we have success, regardless of this state's 'right-to-work' status."

More ESP stories in this issue:

- **NEA members mourn death of Tennessee ESP** – *Page 13*
- **New Mexico ESPs testify for a living wage** – *Page 19*
- **ESPs share success stories from the school year** – *Page 22*

PHOTOS: SAUL LOEB

Should the school year be longer?



YES

We are trying to fit the needs of today's students into a traditional calendar developed decades ago, and that doesn't work any better than my trying to fit into my outfits of 30 years ago!

Our students simply need to know more. The world they will enter demands much more than it used to. How often do you try to prioritize what to teach and then find that you never get to the "other" things that are also important?

And how many of us would like to see our schools have full programs in physical education, health, art, music, and world languages, but there's no time?

This is the age of accountability, and so far that means the age of assessment. We have added many hours of testing without lengthening the school year, so we have lost precious instructional time.

We don't even have time to reflect on the test results, give students feedback, and then encourage them to try again. We merely race on. Maybe with an extended calendar these assessments could truly be *for* learning, not just *of* learning!

It is also the age of "all" kids. We are supposed to help all students achieve, and we know much more about how to meet their different learning styles. But there is precious little time for them to do hands-on projects, work collaboratively in groups, give presentations, or get engaged in service learning.

It may seem that our students already have as much school as they can stand, but with more time, we could be more creative, and they would learn more.

Then there is the long summer break and the struggle to resume school after it. Yes, many students are involved in summertime learning of all kinds. But these opportunities are not available to all, and so the inequities continue.

Many other countries have school years of 200 days or more. I am convinced that although tradition is a big hurdle, the main obstacle is that we have yet to make funding schools our priority.

GRACE LEAVITT teaches Spanish at Greely High School in Cumberland, Maine.

NO

As I write this in the middle of March, teachers are concentrating on how to maximize their students' test scores and how to ensure that they're prepared for the next grade, right? No, not really. The truth is that teachers are pondering two things this month: what to do for summer vacation and how to get through a month with no legal holidays.

Oh, the shock! Aren't teachers supposed to be altruistic examples of selflessness? Shouldn't teachers *want* to work year-round in order to better educate the students? The answer is an unequivocal *no*. Teachers are human. We suffer from burnout as much as any other occupation. But unlike many others, we are responsible for turning out well-educated students who can succeed in college and in life. That's why we need our summer break. It is a time to relax, recharge our batteries, and regain our patience, the latter of which is paramount to being an effective teacher.

One might think students would benefit from a longer school year. They would have more time to learn the curriculum before standardized testing, and lessons could be taught in many ways to meet their diverse learning styles.

In a perfect world, maybe. Chances are that we would be required to cram more information into the curriculum. Students, like teachers, are only human. They can handle only so much education before suffering information overload.

Many other countries have a longer school year, but those countries treat their children like small adults. Our students need the summer to relax, play, and act like children before returning to school in the fall.

Yes, they may forget information in the meantime, but let's face it—they'll do the same thing over the weekend.

Extending the school year would result in irritable teachers, disinterested students, and even lower test scores. Taking a summer break is a necessary evil.

DOROTHY MOODY is a first-year math and science teacher at Jehue Middle School in Rialto, California.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should the school year be longer?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers let failing students pass by doing an "extra credit" assignment?
The tally on this *NEA Today* Debate question:
28% Yes 72% No

Should teachers express their views in class on controversial topics?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

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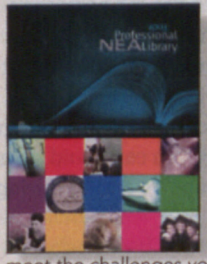

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Close Up Foundation *www.closeup.org*

When Talk Ain't Cheap

We're in love with our cell phones—but not with confusing plan options and poor service. Are you in need of an upgrade?

BY MARY ROWLAND

Cell phones are no longer simply an option for many Americans. Frequent fliers must have them. College students, too, many of whom no longer even bother with a land line. We're crazy about those little phones—but not about the hassle of deciphering obscure service plans and dodging hidden fees. A recent survey in *Consumer Reports* found widespread dissatisfaction with cellular service, with 35 percent of respondents saying they are seriously considering switching carriers to get better service.

The best time to research your options is before you buy your phone or when your contract is nearly up. Most carriers require one- or two-year contracts, so before you commit to a plan, you need to consider:

HOME AND ROAM. Where will you use your phone? Most carriers provide a home area. If you leave your home area, you are "roaming" and must pay additional fees. The home area might be the urban area where you live, your entire state, or the whole country. Choose carefully because calls made or received outside your area can cost a lot. For more information, go to www.wirelessguide.org.

GAB FEST. How much will you talk? And when? Both calls you make and those you receive count toward your monthly limit. Carriers provide a range of plans, with the lowest level being a pre-paid phone card. Choose this if you expect to use your phone only for emergencies. If your child is a college student, consider one of the "family plans" where you get unlimited minutes between family members as well as a discount on the second account. Some carriers offer free minutes between all customers who use that carrier's plan. Many plans offer free minutes on weekends and weekday evenings. You'll save if you choose a plan that closely matches your family's pattern of phone use.

BELLS AND WHISTLES. Consider various frills. Ask friends what they like and dislike about their phones. Do you want a folding phone? A tiny one? Check the keypad to make sure you can easily access the buttons. Some phones take and send pictures. Some connect with the Internet and allow you to send e-mail. Don't get something that is merely gimmicky. But if you have just had a baby and the grandparents live on the other coast, the picture phone might be worth the extra fee. Be careful about "text messages," especially if your child will use your phone. Text messaging can be addictive for teens and usually costs extra. Unless your plan includes that feature, you can get hit with a stiff bill.

SERVICE QUALITY. The sleek cell phones may gleam, but how good is the carrier's service in your calling area? Check results of a survey, like the one done by *Consumer Reports* (www.consumerreports.org) that evaluates carriers. Ask your friends if they're happy with their carrier. What would they look for in choosing a new carrier? *Consumer Reports* suggests you start with a one-year contract in case you are unhappy with the service. Two-year contracts typically offer a better deal as well as a bigger discount on the phone. But most contracts carry a stiff fee for early cancellation. Be certain you understand what that is. Also check to see if you are permitted to change phones during the contract period.

CHECK THAT BILL. Go easy the first billing period, especially if more than one person uses the phone. When the bill comes, go over it carefully to make certain that you understand the costs and that there are no surprises. If you incurred charges you did not expect, verify them, and figure out how you can avoid them in the future, perhaps by calling during different hours.

KEEP THE PEACE. Remember to turn your phone's ringer off in theaters, in movies, at church, and during dinner!

ILLUSTRATION: ROZ WOODWARD

Lease or Buy Those New Wheels?

Chances are good that the new Camry in your neighbor's driveway is leased. Last year, more than one-third of Americans decided to lease rather than buy when it was time to get a new car. If you're in the market, ask yourself these questions:

WHAT MEANS more to me, lower monthly payments or lower overall cost?
HOW LONG do I expect to drive this car?
IS CAR DESIGN and prestige a top priority?
WILL I PUT more than 18,000 to 20,000 miles a year on my new car?

Buying a car is cheaper overall. But you can probably lease with no down payment, and your payments will be lower each month. If you plan to keep a car for five years or more, buying is for you. If you want a fancier car than you could otherwise afford, consider leasing. Your monthly payments will be lower, but you will never escape them. Most leases provide for 12,000 to 15,000 miles per year. Extra miles cost 10 cents to 25 cents each. If you think you will drive considerably more than the lease allows, lean toward buying.

The Bank of You

To many Americans, a federal tax refund check is one of the rites of spring, bringing money to finance a renovation project or some yard work. Three out of four individual tax filers got refunds last year, according to the Internal Revenue Service. The average refund was $2,000; the total over $200 billion.

BUT IT'S TIME TO BE SMARTER WITH YOUR MONEY and recognize that a tax refund of more than $500 means you're allowing the government to use your money for free. A better plan: change your tax withholding to bring in a little more net income each payday—and discipline yourself to put the extra cash into a retirement or rainy day fund.

If you want to stop loaning Uncle Sam your extra bucks, start with your W-4 form. (It's on file with your human resources office.) The W-4 helps your employer estimate how much tax you'll owe based on the number of "allowances" listed on the form. Allowances include one for yourself, one for a spouse, and one for each child. But using the allowances is an inexact science, so if you consistently end up overpaying taxes throughout the year, use the worksheet on the W-4 to make an adjustment.

If your refund check is more than $500, go to www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p919.pdf and look at IRS Pub 919 for help on how to adjust your withholding for the new year. You can print out the W-4 at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf, fill it out, and take it to your human resources office to make a change.

www.neamb.com

Rx for Savings

Odds are that the doctors you visit do not know how much you pay for the prescriptions they give you. Sure, they know that generic pills are cheaper than the brand-name medicines. But they probably don't know which drugs are cheaper according to your health insurance plan's formulary, nor how much of a co-pay you fork over when you show up at the pharmacy counter.

Some tips for saving a few dollars when you need a prescription drug:

GO ONLINE. Check the Web for prices on any maintenance drugs you take. At least two Web sites, www.DestinationRx.com and www.pillbot.com offer to compare prices and find the lowest online price. The sites break down the quantities to give you a "price per unit," or the dollar amount for each pill you take. A new site from Consumers Union (www.crbestbuydrugs.org) is another great resource. It lists "best buy" drugs in these categories: anti-depressants, arthritis/pain, heartburn/acid reflux, and cholesterol-lowering medications.

ADD IT UP. Drugstore.com list prices for 30 tablets and for 90 tablets. Often three times as many tablets cost only twice as much. But double-check. Drug companies generally charge less for the most popular dosage of a medicine. For instance, 30 tablets of 20 mg pills might cost $20; 30 tablets of 40 mg might be $75. Find the most economical way to get the dose you need.

ASK FOR A PRICE MATCH. Check with your local pharmacy to see if it can match the lowest price you found online. Some will. Don't forget that you must pay shipping and handling for online orders.

SEE ABOUT OTC DRUGS. At your next regular checkup, ask your doctor if any of the medicines you take could be replaced by over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. If you have a high co-pay, an OTC drug may work well for you at a fraction of the cost.

PHOTO TOP: STOCKBYTE, ILLUSTRATION RIGHT: ART GLAZER

NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST PLAN
2003 SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT
(Trust Plan Year Beginning September 1, 2003)

The following is the summary annual report for the NEA Members Insurance Trust® Plan (Trust), Employer Identification Number 52-1126682, including information for NEA Life Insurance® Program, NEA Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance Program, NEA DUES-TAB®, and NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program for period beginning September 1, 2003, and ending August 31, 2004. The annual report has been filed with the Internal Revenue Service, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

BASIC NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The value of Trust assets, after subtracting liabilities of the Trust was **$90,722,967** as of August 31, 2004, compared to **$84,368,622** as of September 1, 2003. During the Trust year, the Trust experienced an increase in its net assets of **$6,354,345**. This increase includes unrealized appreciation and depreciation in the value of Trust assets; that is, the difference between the value of the Trust assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. During the Trust year, the Trust had total income of **$81,529,468** including participant contributions of **$68,709,692**, realized gain of **$8,110,108** from the sale of assets, and earnings from investments of **$4,737,230**. Trust expenses were **$75,175,123**. These expenses included benefits paid to participants and beneficiaries, administrative and other expenses.

INFORMATION FOR NEA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with Minnesota Life Insurance Company to pay all NEA Preferred Term Life Insurance claims and The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all other NEA Life Insurance claims incurred under the terms of this program. The total contributions for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2003, and ending August 31, 2004, were **$34,207,030**.

Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2004, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were **$34,207,030** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$31,478,235**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT (AD&D) PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all NEA AD&D claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 2003, and ending August 31, 2004 were **$2,752,316**.

Because it is a so called "experienced rated" contract, the premium costs are affected by, among other things, the number and size of claims. Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2004, the contributions made under such "experienced-rated" contract were **$2,752,316** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$2,321,674**.

INFORMATION FOR NEA DUES-TAB PROGRAM

The Trust has a contract with The Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay all NEA DUES-TAB claims incurred under the terms of the Trust. The NEA DUES-TAB program is self-supporting and paid by premiums from the NEA Members Insurance Trust funds rather than from Member contributions. The total contributions for the Trust year beginning September 1, 2003 and ending August 31, 2004 were **$2,220,928**.

Of the total contributions made for the Trust year ending August 31, 2004, the contributions made were **$2,220,928** and the total of all benefit claims paid under the contract during the Trust year was **$2,015,438**. Benefits charged, less benefit claims paid, were **$59,950** which is comprised of incurred but unreported claims and a pooled claim charge. Trust expenses, less benefit claims paid, were **$61,930** in premium taxes and **$155,510** in other expenses.

INFORMATION FOR NEA MEMBERCARE MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

The total contributions for the Trust plan year beginning September 1, 2003, and ending August 31, 2004, were **$10,164,846**. The total number of participants was **6,606**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As a participant, you have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, for a reasonable charge or you may inspect the Annual Report without charge at the office of NEA Members Insurance Trust, c/o NEA Member Benefits, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 or at the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington, D.C. You also have the right to receive from the Trust Administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the Trust and accompanying notes, or a statement of income and expenses of the Trust and accompanying notes, or both. The Administrator will state the charge, if any, of the specific document you request so you can find out the cost before ordering.

NEA Members Insurance Trust

Teacher Interrupted

What was the most unnecessary PA interruption you've had to suffer?

ANSWER: "If you cannot hear this announcement, please call the office."

PAUL McOSKER
High school special education teacher
Novi, Michigan

ANSWER: At a school where I once taught, the assistant principal got so excited one day about the arrival of the paychecks that he announced on the PA, "Teachers, the eagle has landed. I repeat, the eagle has landed." One teacher, concerned that she might have missed a change in the code language for "intruder in the building," locked down her classroom.

KELLY SLATON
Language arts and journalism teacher
Augusta, Kansas

Elementary Artists

I am a grade 4–6 art teacher and will be starting an art club. Any ideas about activities and how it could be organized?

LORNA PEZANELLI
Millbury, Massachusetts.

ANSWER: Have those kids create art that's needed for community events such as Chamber events and local fund-raisers. These events always require signage or art to be auctioned off. Let the kids help design the posters, working closely with the organizers.

Find out who your talented painters are and put out the word to business people who need murals for their office area. There seems to be a constant need for that in our community. We have also painted community day care walls.

MEG BESHEY
Fort Dodge, Iowa

High School Eaters

I am interested in teaching an elective science course in nutrition to high school juniors and seniors. Are there programs out there like that?

JUDD HULBERT, *High school science teacher, La Mesa, California*

Many more answers can be found at www.nea.org/neatodayextra

ANSWER: I used to teach a nutritional science course. One site I enjoy is www.kidseatwell.org. When looking for curriculum, try key words like "food science," "nutritional science" or "family and consumer science." Try this one, to get you started: www.nsta.org/fda.

JENNY MILLER, *Family and consumer sciences teacher, Plainfield, Illinois*

ANSWER: There are great courses and texts combining science and food, usually called food science or nutritional science. I have been teaching nutritional science for about 15 years. Kentucky has a course outline. Go to www.education.ky.gov, type in "science classes" in the search box at the top right, and click on "Nutritional and Food Science."

It can also be an interdisciplinary course between family and consumer sciences and chemistry teachers.

CAROL EICHER, *Family and consumer sciences teacher , London, Kentucky*

Social Values

I recently was hired to teach social studies grades 6 and 8. Any good ideas out there to help the children understand the value of social studies right from the start of our school year?

DAVIDA LINDSAY-HAREWOOD
Montclair, New Jersey

Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What was your most embarrassing moment as chaperone for a student prom?

Send your answers to these or other questions on this page to **ajehlen@nea.org**. Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org**.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: DIGITAL VISION, CENTER LEFT: STEPHANIE CARTER; CARTOON: GEORGE B. ABBOTT

The Making of a Star

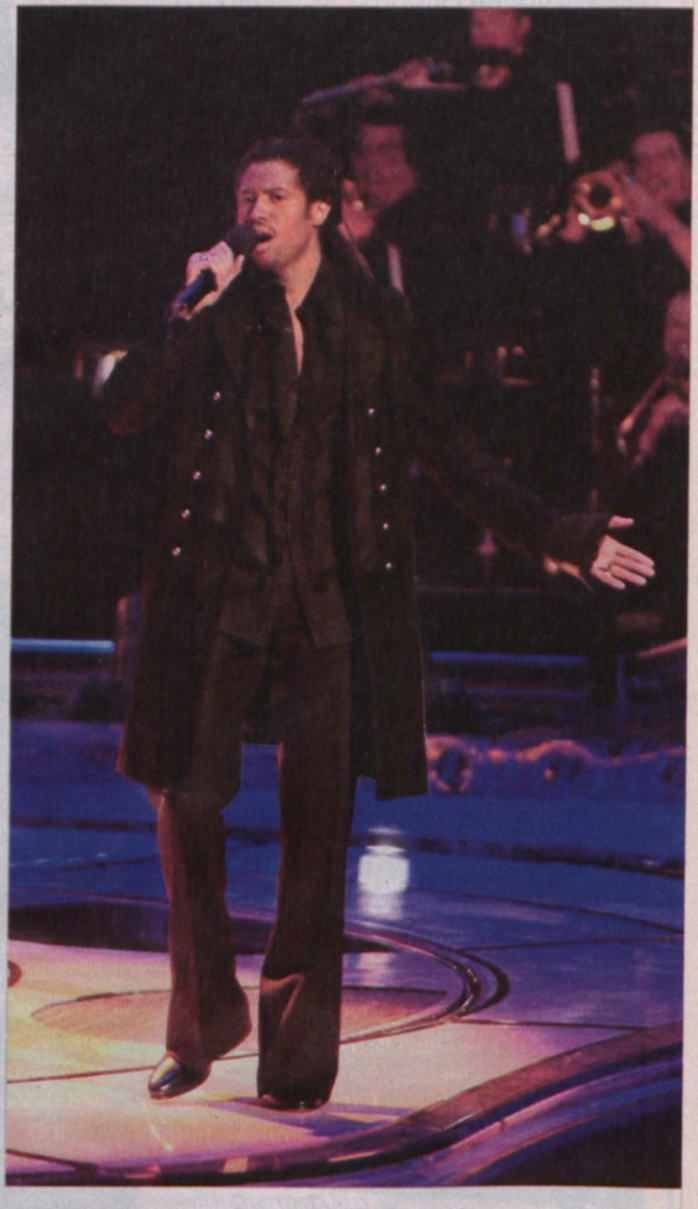
Win or lose, Anwar Robinson is an "American Idol" to his students and colleagues at Edison Middle School in West Orange, New Jersey.

ANWAR ROBINSON was a hit at Edison Middle School long before the rest of America discovered him on TV's red-hot *American Idol*. The soft-spoken vocalist and school choir director is lauded there for his teaching as much as his talent.

In case you haven't been glued to your television, *Idol* is the top-rated reality series in which singers compete for a recording contract with a major label. Robinson beat the odds by making it past the initial cut of 100,000 hopefuls to become one of the 12 finalists who ended up as household names—whether or not they take the top prize. As *NEA Today* went to press, eight contestants were left and Robinson was still standing. If it were up to his fans at Edison, Robinson would make it all the way.

Robinson, who studied classical music at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, New Jersey, radiates a "fresh style," says school band director Jay Gitter. "When Anwar introduces a new piece of music, he sings the song to the kids to heighten their interest. Then he'll explain what it's about and break it down so they'll get the musical elements."

"The students definitely bought into what Robinson was teaching because they could tell he was genuine," adds Joe Romano, who teaches sixth-grade band and plays trumpet. "He uses his gift and maximizes it to its full potential." Romano admits his colleague's multi-week run on the show also keeps



him tuned in: "I've caught the *Idol* fever, too."

"We all got on the bandwagon," says principal Errol Scales, a former junior high music teacher and jazz trumpeter, "holding Anwar parties in the building every Tuesday evening, with screens set up in the auditorium to watch the competition." Scales says Robinson's celebrity has given Edison new status: "He has put us on the map. The school is viewed in such a positive way."

Most important, Robinson's run on *Idol* sends a positive message to his students. During one show, Robinson announced to the audience that auditioning for *Idol* despite the odds proved to his students that all of us can follow our dreams.

—MIKE TUCKER

Left: Edison students use their cell phones to post votes for their choir director.
Right: **Anwar Robinson** performs on American Idol.

PHOTO TOP COURTESY OF AMERICAN IDOL; BOTTOM: AP/MARKO GEORGIEV

Forging History

Pull an award-winning book from the library shelf at Edward Devotion Primary School, and odds are you'll find it was written by the librarian who checked it out for you.

AS A MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL LIBRARIAN, Norman Finkelstein manages a room full of books, but what's truly remarkable is that 13 of those books were written by him. In fact, Finkelstein recently received a National Jewish Book Award for his latest work, *Forged in Freedom: Shaping the Jewish American Experience*.

This is the second National Jewish Book Award Finkelstein has received, among many other awards, including the Golden Kite Honor Award given to him by the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators in 1997 for *With Heroic Truth: The Life of Edward R. Murrow*.

Finkelstein's other young adult nonfiction books and biographies have exposed his readers to a variety of topics over the past 20 years, ranging from the golden age of radio to the Cuban missile crisis. "I've been fortunate," says Finkelstein. "Each of my books has allowed me to pursue a personal interest. And I love the research part of the process—searching through the archives, poring over books, going on the Internet and learning new things—that's what I enjoy most of all. The library is the perfect laboratory for any writer."

This is Finkelstein's last year as the librarian at Edward Devotion School (K–8) in Brookline, which has a special library archive devoted to President John F. Kennedy, Devotion's most famous student. Finkelstein, who hopes to spend more time writing after retirement, plans to add even more history books to those library shelves. "Students have very little understanding or connection with history before they were born," says Finkelstein. "An understanding of the past helps them grow."

—DONNA CHIU

A Diversity Pioneer Goes Green

Most gardeners dabble in a few types of plants that interest them most, spending an hour or two planting and pulling weeds when they can. Then there's Sara Flores.

VISIT FLORES' HOME IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS, and you'll discover more than 50 different—and quite diverse—plant species, including orchids, Japanese bonsai trees, roses, cactuses, and prized Texas hibiscus. As a result, something magnificent is flourishing in her gardens every season.

"I love all my plants," says Flores. "I have quite a mixed bag growing, but I don't want to limit myself."

Flores works one full day each week tending to her plants in addition to a little time each day. She also belongs to four different gardening groups.

"I've had a real green thumb since I was a teenager. But I taught for 39 years, and my husband, Humberto, and I have six kids...so only since retiring have I had the time I really want to spend in the garden."

Flores specialized in elementary school bilingual education and now boasts that all five of her daughters are teaching and working with Spanish-speaking students. "It's very gratifying to see them following that course," she says, adding she plans to mentor student teachers going into bilingual education.

Despite earning her Master Gardener's certificate, Flores still considers herself a student. "I'm still learning," she laughs, "my roses didn't turn out so well the other year."

—MATT SIMON

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Sabrina Holcomb, section editor, at **sholcomb@nea.org**

PHOTO TOP: PATRICIA McDONNELL; BOTTOM: EDDIE SEAL

The 2005 NEA Representative Assembly

This July, more than 9,000 NEA members elected by their state and local colleagues will gather in Los Angeles, California, for the annual NEA Representative Assembly (RA), July 3–6. The RA is the Association's highest decision-making body. Delegates will be voting on the proposed amendments listed below, as well as electing the NEA President, Vice President, and two members of the Executive Committee. You can find day-to-day coverage of RA debates and action by going online to www.nea.org.

NOTE:

- Proposed insertions of language are underscored; proposed deletions are shown in [ ].
- Amendment language may receive minor editorial changes before consideration by the Representative Assembly.
- Complete impact statements for the amendments will be posted in the "members only" area of nea.org by May 1, 2005.

Proposed Amendments to the NEA Standing Rules, Constitution, and Bylaws for vote by the 2005 Representative Assembly.

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 1

Rule 5. State Delegations

[**G.** No state booth may remain open during any business meeting of the Representative Assembly.]

Contact Person: Pamela Chambers, Nevada

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 2

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate

J. A roll call vote (the counting of delegates by state delegations) shall be taken only after approval, by a standing vote, of one-third (1/3) of the delegates present. The doors shall be closed while a count is being taken. Supervision and counting of roll call votes shall be in the charge of the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules. In the event of the approval of a roll call vote during official RA delegate voting time, the roll call vote shall be postponed to the closest non-voting time.

Contact Person: John Michaud, Missouri

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 3

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate

R. The text of a new business item adopted by a Representative Assembly may be edited with the approval of the President provided no substantive changes are made and the final text is approved in writing by the mover and the seconder.

During the program year of implementation, the mover of a new business item adopted by the Representative Assembly shall be advised about the steps being undertaken to accomplish its implementation.

(new section)

W. Any proposed new business item that impacts the planning and organizing of an annual regional conference shall automatically be forwarded to the appropriate conference planning committee for consideration. The planning committee shall not be required to implement the new business item.

Any proposed new business item that impacts the conduct of the Annual Meeting shall automatically be referred to the Annual Meeting Review Committee for an assessment. The Annual Meeting Review Committee shall submit a recommendation regarding implementation of the new business item to the NEA Board of Directors at the Board's February Meeting.

Contact: Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 3A

Rule 6. Order of Business and Debate

W. New business items shall only be referred to the Annual Meeting Review Committee by direct action of the Representative Assembly.

Contact Person: Susie C. Jablinske, Maryland

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 4

Rule 10. Definition of Resolutions, Committee, and Procedure

F. Procedures for Submitting Resolutions

Resolutions from delegates or members designated for consideration by the Resolutions Committee at its winter meeting shall be submitted to the Executive Director or the chairperson of the Resolutions Committee or the members of the Resolutions Committee from their states [postmarked not later than February 15].

Contact Person: Brent McKim, Kentucky

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 5

Rule 10. Definition of Resolutions, Committee, and Procedure

F. Procedures for Submitting Resolutions

Resolutions from delegates or members designated for consideration by the Resolutions Committee at its winter meeting shall be submitted to the Executive Director or the chairperson of the Resolutions Committee or the members of the Resolutions Committee from their states postmarked not later than February 15.

The committee shall hold at least one (1) open hearing on proposed resolutions at a time and place to be announced in the printed program. The Resolutions Committee shall meet on a day prior to the open hearing and shall meet following the open hearing to consider any changes (additions, deletions, and/or amendments) it may wish to make in its report to the Representative Assembly.

The Resolutions Committee shall recommend a body of resolutions in its annual report to the Representative Assembly. These resolutions shall be presented for vote en masse.

The submission of all new resolutions, amendments to resolutions, and requests to set aside resolutions for discussion shall be submitted to the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules no later than 12:00 noon on the second day of the Representative Assembly.

All new resolutions to be submitted from the floor for consideration must have a majority of the vote to be placed on the agenda (heard) and a two-thirds (2/3) vote to pass.

Resolutions submitted for consideration by the Representative Assembly shall be in writing on the forms provided, signed by the maker and the seconder of the motion.

At the request of any delegate, a proposed resolution shall be separately considered for the purpose of discussion or amendment. Following consideration of such designated resolutions, the Representative Assembly shall vote en masse upon the resolutions as amended.

The consideration of the NEA resolutions shall commence with the goal area containing the final resolution debated at the preceding Representative Assembly.

Resolutions adopted by a Representative Assembly shall continue in force until the next Representative Assembly acts upon the report of the Resolutions Committee.

All resolutions adopted by the NEA Representative Assembly shall be publicized as official NEA resolutions.

Contact Person: Brent McKim, Kentucky

STANDING RULE AMENDMENT 6

Rule 10. Definition of Resolutions, Committee, and Procedure

F. Procedures for Submitting Resolutions

Resolutions from delegates or members designated for consideration by the Resolutions Committee at its winter meeting shall be submitted to the Executive Director or the chairperson of the Resolutions Committee or the members of the Resolutions Committee from their states postmarked not later than February 15.

The committee shall hold at least one (1) open hearing on proposed resolutions at a time and place to be announced in the printed program. The Resolutions Committee shall meet on a day prior to the open hearing and shall meet following the open hearing to consider any changes (additions, deletions, and/or amendments) it may wish to make in its report to the Representative Assembly.

The Resolutions Committee shall recommend a body of resolutions in its annual report to the Representative Assembly. These resolutions shall be presented for vote en masse.

All new resolutions to be submitted from the floor for consideration must have a majority of the vote to be placed on the agenda (heard) and a two-thirds (2/3) vote to pass.

Resolutions submitted for consideration by the

Representative Assembly shall be in writing on the forms provided, signed by the maker and the seconder of the motion.

[At the request of any delegate, a proposed resolution shall be separately considered for the purpose of discussion or amendment. Following consideration of such designated resolutions, the Representative Assembly shall vote en masse upon the resolutions as amended.] New resolutions, amendments to resolutions, and requests to set aside resolutions for discussion shall be submitted (1) by petition of at least fifty (50) delegates, (2) by a majority vote of those present and voting at a state delegation at a regularly called meeting of the delegation in connection with the Annual Meeting, (3) by a governance body of the NEA or a state or local affiliate, or (4) by the Resolutions Committee.

The consideration of the NEA resolutions shall commence with the goal area containing the final resolution debated at the preceding Representative Assembly.

Resolutions adopted by a Representative Assembly shall continue in force until the next Representative Assembly acts upon the report of the Resolutions Committee.

All resolutions adopted by the NEA Representative Assembly shall be publicized as official NEA resolutions.

Contact Person: Brent McKim, Kentucky

BYLAW AMENDMENT 1

2-7. Membership Dues

n. Beginning with the 2000–01 membership year and continuing through the 2009–10 membership year, the annual membership dues of Active members of the Association, as computed pursuant to Bylaw 2–7.a, shall be increased by five dollars ($5.00) through the 2004–05 membership year; by six dollars ($6.00) during the 2005–06 membership year; by seven dollars ($7.00) during the 2006–07 membership year; by eight dollars ($8.00) during the 2007–08 membership year; by nine dollars ($9.00) during the 2008–09 membership year; and by ten dollars ($10.00) during the 2009–10 membership year, provided that during the 2005–06 membership year through the 2009–10 membership year the increase in the annual membership dues of Active members of the Association in educational support positions shall remain at five dollars ($5.00). The annual membership dues of Student members of the Association shall be increased by one-dollar ($1.00) through the 2009–10 membership year. This dues increase shall be allocated to the Ballot Measure/Legislative Crises and Media Campaign Fund.

Contact Person: Sue Watson, Washington

BYLAW AMENDMENT 2

8-11. Standards for State Affiliates

b. The affiliate shall conduct elections with open nominations and a secret ballot. In considering an application for affiliation of an organization in New York as a dual-national state affiliate, the Executive Committee may waive the requirement for a secret ballot election of the affiliate's officers, provided that (i) in the membership year immediately preceding the effective date of merger, the active membership of the affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers was at least five (5) times the active membership of the affiliate of the Association, and (ii) the dual-national state affiliate has a procedure which allows local affiliates that wish to vote for officers of the dual-national state affiliate by a secret ballot to do so.

Contact: NEA Board of Directors

Candidates Running for Office

Candidate for President

REG WEAVER

TEAM NEA, together we have made great strides! Because we have outlined issues and identified solutions, today we have increased our sphere of respect, influence and support. This is extremely important because it affects students and public education. Our successful GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR EVERY CHILD action plan has and will continue to address:

- Closing the achievement gaps,
- Fixes to ESEA's so-called "No Child Left Behind" law,
- Outreach to the ethnic minority communities,
- Increasing membership, and
- Educator salaries and compensation.

While we have had many successes, we recognize and are prepared for the work that lies ahead, i.e., Social Security, pension plans, opportunity scholarships, education funding. Working together, NEA can make a difference.

Candidate for Vice President

DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

NEA's work and commitment on behalf of all members and public education must continue. NEA stands proudly as the greatest hope—the greatest collective voice—for students and their right to a quality public education. Perhaps this journey requires too great a stretch of the imagination for some, but for you and me this is not a fantasy; it is our collective vision and our dream. In these times of political rhetoric—of promises broken even as they are uttered—we must remember what separates the members of NEA from so many others: our vision is more than a promise; it is a commitment that defines our work and our very essence.

NEA's journey forward is critical to students, public education, and NEA members.

Candidates for NEA Executive Committee, three-year term (elect two)

MICHAEL BILLIRAKIS

The future of a free democracy depends upon a public education system that serves all learners. The NEA is the largest organization that represents and defends the interests of public education, including the rights of and obligations to all students and the education professionals whose job it is to provide for them. The NEA must lead the fight against those who would privatize public education, who would in fact privatize all public services—including our public pension systems.

The NEA flourishes as a leader in this nation and around the world in support of public education when we have strong experienced leadership. I am convinced more than ever that the survival of public education in our nation rests with the professionalism, commitment, and dedication of the NEA, its leaders, and its members.

MARSHA SMITH

Elected to the NEA Executive Committee in 2002, Marsha Smith of Olney, Maryland, has served as Chair of Maryland's Professional Standards Board, on the NEA Board of Directors and Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, and as a delegate to Education International. Smith says, "NEA leaders must be prepared to meet future challenges and opportunities. With continual attacks on public education, NEA needs strong leaders who will help solve challenges and create opportunities. Team NEA must continue to work at the local, state, national and international levels to create a vision that will empower NEA leadership on high student achievement and quality staff, to meet member needs and ensure full participation, to promote non-partisan grassroots political involvement, and to build and promote community and coalition involvement."

ONLINE NEWS YOU CAN USE from NEA

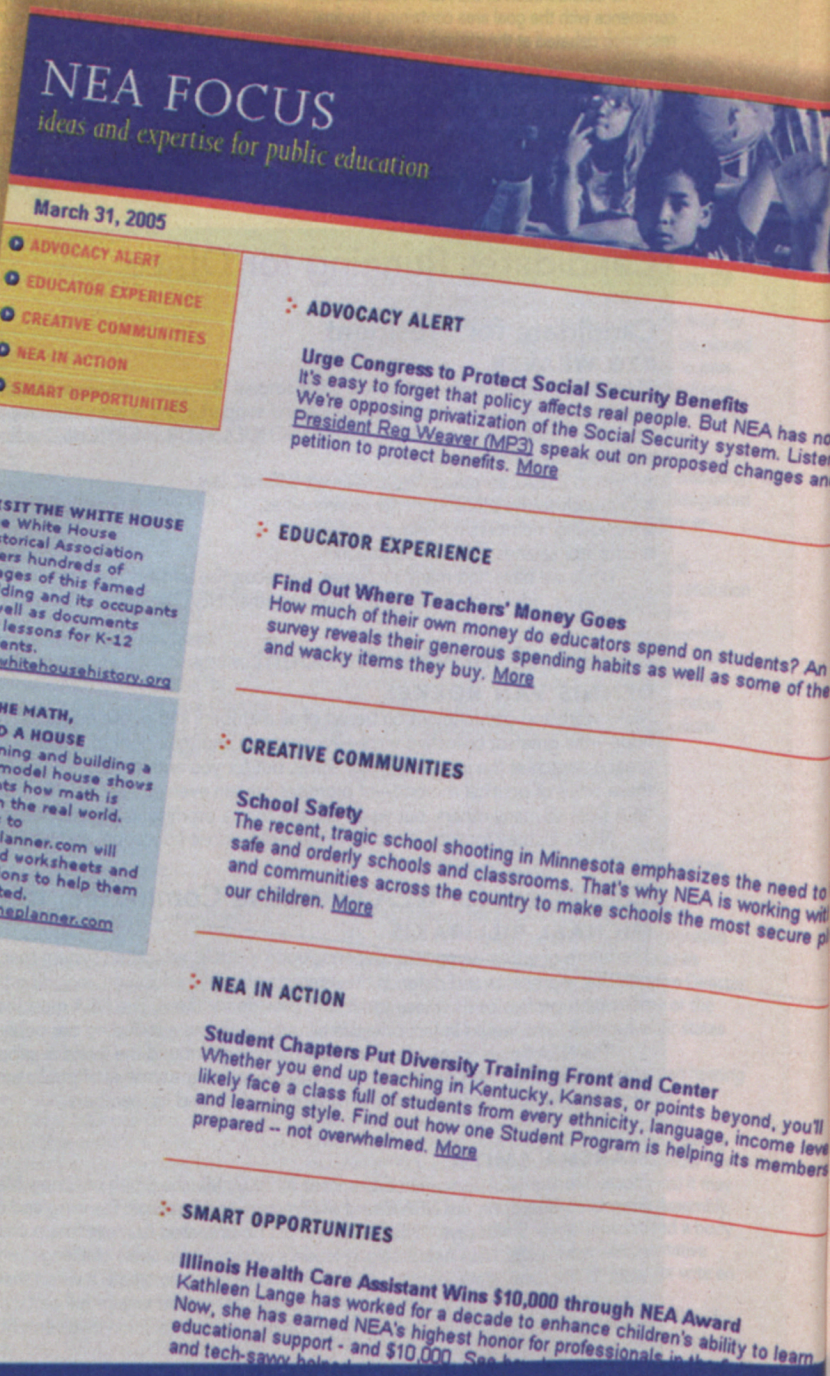
www.nea.org

Want the latest on

- **Classroom techniques?**
- **Education policy?**
- **Special offers for members?**
- **Lesson ideas?**

NEA has an email newsletter just for you.

- **NEA Focus**
- **Works4Me**
- **NEA Announce**
- **NEA Member News**



NEA FOCUS

ideas and expertise for public education

March 31, 2005

ADVOCACY ALERT
EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE
CREATIVE COMMUNITIES
NEA IN ACTION
SMART OPPORTUNITIES

VISIT THE WHITE HOUSE
The White House Historical Association offers hundreds of images of this famed building and its occupants as well as documents and lessons for K-12 students.
www.whitehousehistory.org

DO THE MATH, BUILD A HOUSE
Designing and building a scale model house shows students how math is used in the real world. Visitors to Homeplanner.com will also find worksheets and illustrations to help them get started.
www.homeplanner.com

ADVOCACY ALERT

Urge Congress to Protect Social Security Benefits
It's easy to forget that policy affects real people. But NEA has no
We're opposing privatization of the Social Security system. Liste
President Reg Weaver (MP3) speak out on proposed changes an
petition to protect benefits. More

EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE

Find Out Where Teachers' Money Goes
How much of their own money do educators spend on students? An
survey reveals their generous spending habits as well as some of the
and wacky items they buy. More

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

School Safety
The recent, tragic school shooting in Minnesota emphasizes the need to
safe and orderly schools and classrooms. That's why NEA is working wit
and communities across the country to make schools the most secure p
our children. More

NEA IN ACTION

Student Chapters Put Diversity Training Front and Center
Whether you end up teaching in Kentucky, Kansas, or points beyond, you'll
likely face a class full of students from every ethnicity, language, income leve
and learning style. Find out how one Student Program is helping its members
prepared -- not overwhelmed. More

SMART OPPORTUNITIES

Illinois Health Care Assistant Wins $10,000 through NEA Award
Kathleen Lange has worked for a decade to enhance children's ability to learn
Now, she has earned NEA's highest honor for professionals in the
educational support - and $10,000. See how
and tech-sawy

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION nea.org

Great Public Schools for Every Child

log on to www.nea.org and sign up today

resources

55 **Grants & Awards** Heading back to college? Horace Mann may have a scholarship for you.
56 **NEA's Read Across America** For summer reading fitness, see www.getakickoutofreading.org.
57 **What's Up at HIN** Send in your nominations for the Ryan White HIV Prevention Award.
57 **Diversity Calendar** May's the time to raise awareness about speech, language, and hearing disorders.
58 **Books by NEA Members** Ways to get creative with book reports.
59 **In Print** Using story-sharing communities in the classroom to teach writing.
59 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Don't sell your home short by under-insuring it.
60 **Take Note** Get ready to pat yourself on the back because it's Teacher Appreciation Week.
61 **Funding Education** NEA Research releases an analysis of weighted student formula.
62 **On TV** PBS offers an in-depth look at modern-day Vietnam.
62 **Censored in America** Project Censored lists the top 25 news stories ignored by mass media.

The NEA Foundation June & September Grants

COULD YOU USE A GRANT to fund an innovative classroom project or professional development experience? Look ahead to The NEA Foundation's next two grant review dates, June 1 and September 15, and apply for an *Innovation Grant* or *Learning & Leadership Grant*.

ThinkBIG! THE NEA FOUNDATION

Innovation Grants and Learning & Leadership Grants are available to all NEA members who are practicing public K–12 school teachers, education support professionals, or higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities.

Members just like you have applied for and received over 1,500 grants throughout the years in all subjects, including the arts, literacy, science, and technology. Grant amounts are either $2,000 or $5,000. Read about recently funded projects at www.neafoundation.org, and then submit your own idea.

Apply by June 1 and you will be notified by November 15. Apply by September 15 and you will be notified by February 15, 2006.

Applications are accepted on an ongoing, year-round basis, so proposals received after these dates will automatically be included in the next review cycle. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

Applying for a grant is easy, so why wait? Visit www.neafoundation.org today for more information, including guidelines and an application, or call 202-822-7840.

AWARD FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATORS

The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund recognizes outstanding high school journalism teachers and newspaper and newsmagazine advisors through its National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year award. The annual competition also selects four Distinguished Advisors and several teachers who receive special recognition awards.

The Teacher of the Year will act as a spokesperson for scholastic journalism and speak at journalism education events, receive a stipend to write a quarterly column for *Adviser Update*, and receive a laptop computer, plaque, and pin. In addition, one of his or her students, who wins a school-wide writing contest will receive a $1,000 scholarship to pursue journalism studies.

To apply, teachers must submit an application, résumé, color photo, 12 copies of the school newspaper or newsmagazine, and no more than three letters of support.

Applicants can be nominated by principals, professional newspaper editors, journalism schools, state press associations, or themselves. To be eligible, teachers must:

- have at least three years of experience teaching high school journalism or advising a newspaper or newsmagazine
- have taught or advised during the current academic year
- plan to continue teaching or advising next year.

The application postmark deadline is July 1, 2005. For an application, go to http://DJNewspaperFund.dowjones.com/fund/forms/TOY2005.pdf.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTYIMAGES

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR EDUCATORS

The Horace Mann Companies offers $30,000 in scholarships for educators to take college courses. To apply, you must be an educator currently employed by a U.S. public or private school district or college/university and planning to enter a two- or four-year accredited college or university. In addition, you must have at least two or more years of teaching experience and be employed by a U.S. public or private school district or college/university at the time of application and at the time the scholarship is awarded.

One recipient will receive $5,000 in scholarship funds payable over four years, and 15 other recipients will receive $1,000 each in scholarship funds payable over two years. Twenty additional recipients will each receive one-time $500 awards.

Scholarship applicants will be judged on a written essay, school and community activities, and letters of recommendation. Applicants who have all education expenses paid through other scholarships or grants are ineligible. The program also is not open to residents of Hawaii, New Jersey, and New York. The application deadline is **May 14, 2005.** For more, see https://www.horacemann.com/edscholarship/.

PRIZES FOR EXCELLENCE IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The Goldman Sachs Foundation and Asia Society are seeking applicants for the 2005 Prizes for Excellence in International Education. Five prizes of $25,000 each recognize schools, higher education institutions, states, and media/technology organizations that are working to "put the world into world-class education."

Applications are due **May 10** for higher education institutions, states, and media/technology, and **May 17** for elementary, middle, and high schools. Full eligibility and application instructions, along with information on past winners, are located at www.internationaled.org/prizes/home.htm.

WHAT DOES YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD MEAN TO YOU?

The National Neighborhood Day organization is promoting National Neighborhood Day with a short film contest for both professional and amateur filmmakers to illustrate, through a five-minute or less film, what their neighborhood means to them. The short film contest is open to K–12 students and adults. There is no entry fee for the Youth Category and the grand prize is $2,000. The deadline for entries is **June 1, 2005.** Go to www.neighborhoodday.org/film.asp for contest rules, entry forms, and more information.

SIGN HERE FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Students in grades K–8 can compete in Sharpie's Autographs for Education contest to win supplies for their school. Between now and **December 31, 2005,** students can collect autographs from everyday people around the community. The 30 schools who collect the most signatures each win $25,000 in school supplies. To enter the contest, schools must download and use official entry forms from Sharpie's Web site. While there, teachers can check out online autograph-inspired lesson plans for grades K–8.

PHOTO: CORBIS

Also, students age 13 and older can go online and enter the "Autographs for Education" sweepstakes for a chance to win a $50,000 scholarship. For more, go to www.sharpie.com/sanford/consumer/sharpie/promotions/autograph.jhtml.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WHO SERVE

The Corporation for National and Community Service will award up to 7,800 Presidential Freedom Scholarships to students who have completed at least 100 hours of community service and plan to attend a higher education institution. High schools can nominate two students who have shown outstanding leadership in community service. The Corporation then provides $500 to which the school must secure a matching donation from a community organization or business. The high school must fill out certification forms with information about the student, his or her service activities, and prospective college information.

Certification forms must be filled out online or postmarked by **July 1, 2005.** For more, go to www.cns.gov/scholarships.

A Summer Season Of Reading

Read Across America Day is over but the reading fun continues. NEA's bilingual partnership with Major League Soccer, Get a Kick Out of Reading\Leer y Marco Un Golazo can help with your reading fitness. Go to www.getakickoutofreading.org. And don't forget to visit www.nea.org for updates on Read Across America 2006 and more reading news.

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What's Up at HIN

NEA HIN

NEA HIN ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR THE RYAN WHITE HIV PREVENTION AWARD

Each year HIN presents the Ryan White HIV Prevention Award to an NEA member or affiliate who has demonstrated a commitment to implementing or supporting innovative HIV prevention education programs. The award will be presented at the 2005 NEA Representative Assembly in Los Angeles, California. To nominate an individual or affiliate, contact Paul Sathrum for a nomination form at 202-822-7787 or psathrum@nea.org. The application deadline is May 27, 2005.

EASIER ACCESS TO ONLINE HIN RESOURCES

Check out www.neahin.org for a first-hand look at HIN's new and improved Web site. Find information and resources on everything from preventing HIV to improving the indoor air quality in your school with this new user-friendly navigation system. Peruse the site and tell us what you think! E-mail comments or suggestions to neahin@nea.org.

A TOOL FOR SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires federally funded school districts to develop and implement a local wellness policy by the fall of 2006. This policy will address nutrition and physical education, establish an assessment plan, and involve a wide range of stakeholders. Does your school or district need a guiding hand in this effort? SmartBODY, HIN's new fitness information center, contains model programs and useful links to get you started. Check it out at www.neasmartbody.org.

Check out www.smartbody.org

CELEBRATE NATIONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS & SPORTS MONTH IN MAY

Join HIN in celebrating healthy lifestyles and exercise! With warm weather upon us, many opportunities exist to promote health and fitness in schools. Organize fun, creative events or campaigns to motivate kids and adults alike. For more information, events, and ideas, check out the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports guide to fitness event collaboration at www.fitness.gov/getmovingamerica.htm. For fitness and nutrition resources, visit the SmartBODY Fitness Information Center at www.neasmartbody.org.

HIN TO HOST NEA CRISIS RESPONSE TRAINING AND ORGANIZING CONFERENCE

Is your state or local Association ready to assist members who experience a natural disaster, violence, or other traumatic event? HIN will host the third annual national NEA Crisis Response Team Training and Organizing Conference, June 1–3, 2005, at NEA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Conference sessions will be conducted by experienced national and state affiliate staff and emergency management experts from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress. Registration is free but limited to state and local Association staff. For more info or to register, e-mail Courtney Sams (csams@nea.org) or Echelle Jordan (ejordan@nea.org) or call 202-822-7570.

PROMOTING HEALTHY SCHOOLS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION

As part of its School Construction and Renovation to Promote Healthy Schools Campaign, the National Parent Teachers Association (PTA) revised its legislative action packet that focuses on promoting physically sound and healthy schools. The packet includes a fact sheet, promotional instructions, reproducible postcards, an environmental checklist, and a guide to Web-based advocacy resources. For more, or to download the packet, visit www.pta.org/ptawashington/index.asp.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

MAY

MAY 1–31—ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Presidential proclamation designates May as a time to celebrate the collective accomplishments of Asian Pacific Americans, who comprise many diverse ethnic groups.

MAY 1–31—BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association sponsors this month to raise awareness about how to identify, prevent, and treat speech, language, and hearing disorders. For more, see www.asha.org.

MAY 17—ANNIVERSARY OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION RULING

On this day in 1954 the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment clause guaranteeing equal protection under the law. See www.nea.org/brownvboard/nearesources-brownvboard.html.

JUNE

JUNE 2—REPUBLIC DAY

Now a national holiday, on this day in 1946, Italy selected a republican government instead of returning to a monarchy.

JUNE 13–14—SHAVUOT

Beginning on sunset, June 12, this Jewish festival commemorates the giving of the law (Torah) to Moses on Mount Sinai.

JUNE 14—FLAG DAY

Celebrated with numerous patriotic observances, this day marks the date in 1777 when the Continental Congress adopted the Stars and Stripes.

JUNE 16—DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

A day to celebrate the heritage of African-American children and to commemorate the achievements and future challenges of Africa.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

CREATIVE BOOK REPORTS: FUN PROJECTS WITH RUBRICS FOR FICTION AND NONFICTION

By Jane Feber

The 39 standards-based projects in this book appeal to all types of learners in grades 4–8, helping them improve their comprehension of different genres of literature and demonstrate knowledge of literary elements. Reproducible rubrics give teachers an effective tool to assess reading comprehension. Written by a language arts teacher, the book includes a CD-ROM with rubrics that can be customized for different content areas. 96 pp. $19.95 from Maupin House. To order, go to www.maupinhouse.com.

PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY POSSIBILITIES

By Dawn De Lorenzo

Young people can accomplish big things as proven in this compilation of stories about extraordinary youths using their lives to help others. Written by a special education middle school teacher, the book uses real-life examples to promote love, hope, commitment, courage, and charity. Each story includes insightful follow-up discussion questions, and the book also has a resource section to help kids learn about causes that appeal to their interests. 96 pp. $12.95 from Chrysalis Publishing Inc. To order, go to www.amazon.com.

THE GOAT LADY

By Jane Bregoli

Elementary school art teacher Bregoli writes and illustrates a quiet homage to an interesting woman in this tale for readers in grades 3–6. Children new to a neighborhood meet and befriend their elderly neighbor, Noelie, dubbed "the Goat Lady" and a social outcast by townspeople for the many animals she keeps. But the children learn what is truly important about this remarkable person and, with their mother, help turn the community's understanding around. 32 pp. $16.95 from Tilbury House Publishers. To order, call 800-582-1899 or go to www.tilburyhouse.com.

HONEY BABY SUGAR CHILD

By Alice Faye Duncan

The poetic words of librarian Duncan and the warm, rich illustrations of Susan Keeter beautifully blend in this book for children ages 3–6. Short and sweet, the book describes the limitless love between mother and child. The sing-song style of writing and the fluid artwork make *Honey Baby Sugar Child* like a song captured on page. For ages 3–6. 32 pp. $15.95 from Simon & Schuster. To order, visit www.simonsayskids.com.

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In Print

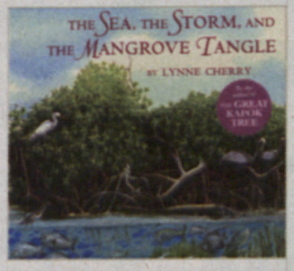
HEARING FOR THE DEAF

Jean Ferris' novel ***Of Sound Mind***, for high school readers, explores the challenges that a disability can place on a family. Theo is the only hearing member of his family and often has to act as an interpreter and caretaker. But during his senior year of high school he's forced to re-examine his life when his father suffers a stroke and he meets self-starter Ivy, who can both hear and sign. 213 pp. $6.95 from Farrar, Straus & Giroux. To order, visit www.fsgbooks.com.

LEARNING THROUGH WRITING

Writing Every Day encourages young minds, K–8, through the drafting and sharing of personal narratives. Using the Daily Letters system—a whole-class sharing of the immediate news, concerns, and experiences of students—educators can create a powerful story-sharing community in their classrooms. Author Kellie Buis shares practical ideas on how to use this alternate approach to teach reading and writing that helps students open the door for dialogue and recognize patterns in everything they read, write, and learn. 152 pp. $18 from Stenhouse Publishing. To order, go to www.stenhouse.com.

DISCOVERING A LITTLE-KNOWN ECOSYSTEM



Nature lover Lynne Cherry raises awareness about the mangroves, beautiful and beneficial Caribbean trees, in her children's book, ***The Sea, the Storm, and the Mangrove Tangle.*** The life of one tree becomes an engaging epic as it grows from a tiny propagule (seed pod) to an entire ecosystem. Sadly, the mangrove population is quickly being depleted because of commercial developments and shrimp farming. The book addresses this issue and more with lavish illustrations of marine life. 32 pp. $16 from Farrar, Straus & Giroux. To order, go to www.fsgkidsbooks.com.

FAIRY TALES REDUX

Eleven traditional fairy tales including Jack and the Beanstalk and Sleeping Beauty receive modern and Latino twists in Patricia Santos Marcantonio's ***Red Ridin' in the Hood***. The alterations are memorable—for instance, Snow White succumbs to a poisoned avocado instead of an apple—and provide readers with a fresh perspective. The cuentos vary in tone from the pert to the poignant. One story even incorporates the Mexican Revolution. A glossary of Spanish terms is also included. 208 pp. $16 from Farrar, Straus & Giroux. To order, go to www.fsgkidsbooks.com.

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Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

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WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY—WWW.NEAMB.COM

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VISIT WWW.NEAMB.COM AND ENTER TO WIN THE MONTHLY GIVEAWAY—FOR NEA MEMBERS ONLY!

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Take Note

Kudos to You

When was the last time someone thanked you for all your hard work? Been a while? Well, this year's **National Teacher Day** presents the perfect opportunity for students, parents, communities, and colleagues to show their gratitude for educators. "Thank a teacher for making public schools great!" is the theme of this year's celebration, taking place on **May 3, 2005**, as part of Teacher Appreciation Week (May 1–7). National Teacher Day is a time for honoring teachers and recognizing the lasting contributions they make to help children succeed in school and in life.

To celebrate this year's event, check out www.nea.org/teacherday. There you'll find this year's poster, a brief history of National Teacher Day, suggested activities, and resources for those considering entering this worthy profession.

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What Do You Believe?

If you're looking for an interesting way to discuss different religions and foster tolerance in your school, you might want to check out the award-winning documentary from Sarah Feinbloom, "What Do You Believe?" In 49 minutes, dozens of teens speak candidly about religion, spirituality, suffering, death, the purpose of life, morality, prayer, and the divine. The video focuses primarily on five teenagers: a Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Pagan, and Native American, who, in speaking frankly about their personal struggles and beliefs, deflate countless stereotypes and misconceptions and make a strong case for tolerance. For a companion discussion guide and to order a copy of the documentary, go to www.whatdoyoubelieve.org. Copies are $99 to purchase or $79 to rent for institutional use; $29.95 for home use.

Oh Say Can You…Sing?

How long has it been since you last patriotically belted out America's National Anthem? Know it by heart? Most of your students probably don't. According to a recent ABC News poll, as few as 15 percent of American youth can sing the words to the anthem from memory. To remedy this situation, the National Association for Music Education (MENC) has launched **The National Anthem Project: Restoring America's Voice**, a multi-year effort to re-teach Americans "The Star-Spangled Banner." The nationwide initiative comes on the heels of a recent Harris Poll that shows two out of three Americans don't know the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner" and many are unaware of the historical events that inspired the penning of the song. This startling statistic

prompted MENC, the world's largest arts education association, to shine the spotlight on the importance of school music programs, as school is where most Americans learn the national anthem and other patriotic songs.

The campaign will include education initiatives in schools across the country, special performances and alliances with professional sporting events, and an extensive mobile marketing tour stopping in cities nationwide. The project has several education partners, including NEA.

Any classroom can get involved in the project. MENC members and staff have created resources to help educators teach patriotic music and raise awareness of the importance of music education in preserving American musical traditions. To access their free lessons, resource lists, advocacy materials, and tips for teaching "The Star-Spangled Banner," go to www.nationalanthemproject.org.

'Weighted' Budgeting for Weighty Needs

THE FINER POINTS OF EDUCATION FINANCE won't ignite spirited debate in your staff lounge. But the moment a colleague pounds the lunch table over the lack of money for ever-growing student needs, it's good to know fiscal concepts such as equity, adequacy, and—a new one—the weighted student formula (WSF).

NEA Research has just released an educator-friendly analysis of WSF (also known as student-based budgeting), a trend emerging in several large urban school districts. Unlike the traditional budgeting model, pegged to staffing needs for a given school's enrollment and teacher-student ratio, a weighted student formula tailors a specific funding level to each child—with extra "weighted" dollars for individual special needs. That funding then follows the child around the district.

WSF proponents contend that this method yields budgeting "efficiency" and fiscal equity, and that it is a useful tool for implementing school site-based management efforts. Little argument there from NEA policy analyst Michael Petko, who scoured available research and authored the WSF study.

WSF indeed appears "more efficient," Petko concedes, curbing redundancy and waste. He also finds that "there appears to be consensus [in the research] that a successful WSF system is enhanced by the degree of site-based management allowed within the district"—so long as site administrators are properly trained in personnel administration and the "complexities" of budgeting.

While WSF "shows promise in helping large districts provide equity" between struggling and high-performing schools, Petko adds, more research is needed to analyze the impact of budgeting efficiency on student success.

And WSF, cautions the researcher, is only a "budgeting system for reallocating resources that currently exist within a district; it is not a system that will increase funding for student services." This method does not, he stresses, address the broader issue of adequacy—funding sufficient to meet rigorous state and federal standards for student achievement and school accountability.

"To date, no costing-out study in any state has concluded that the level of resources within the state meets an acceptable level of adequacy," Petko concludes. Take that bit of wisdom to the lunch table.

To read *Weighted Student Formula: What Is It and How Does It Impact Programs in Large Urban Districts?* go to www.nea.org/neatodayextra. To learn more about funding adequacy, read the "Rights Watch" column on page 21 and go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0209/news18.html.

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On TV

TIME MACHINE—CINCO DE MAYO

History Channel, May 5, 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This program tells the story of the 1862 battle in Puebla, Mexico, between the French army and an ill-equipped Mexican army. The hourlong show can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with Spanish-language teaching materials available at www.historychannel.com/classroom/admin/study_guide/archives/thc_guide.2847.html.

SPORTSFIGURES

ESPN2, May 9, 4:30 a.m., ET.
In this popular series, professional athletes use sports to demonstrate math and physics concepts. This month's episode, "Ice Ain't Easy/Breaking Energy," figure skater Sasha Cohen explains heating curves, heat of fusion, and calorimetry, while Tiger Schulmann uses karate to demonstrate kinetic energy, stress, and work. Educators can tape and use the show in the classroom with materials at http://sportsfigures.espn.com/sportsfigures.

TLC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL—EXPLORING STARS

TLC, May 13, 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
Designed for grades K–6, this program examines the forces that power the Sun, follows the life cycle of a star, and looks at telescopes that photograph objects light-years away from Earth. The show is part of a series that consists of segments edited from original documentaries and that can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. Teaching materials are available at www.discoveryschool.com.

VIETNAM: THE NEXT GENERATION

PBS, May 17, 10 p.m., ET, check local listings.
Americans remember the Vietnam War. But what do we know of those born in its aftermath? Meet eight young Vietnamese, some born in the final days of the Vietnam War, others in the war's tragic aftermath. They are entrepreneurs and street kids, farmers and students, artists and engineers. Together they embody the hopes, dreams, and frustrations of a new Vietnam. Through their stories, this groundbpreaking Independent Lens program takes an in-depth look at modern day Vietnam, where communism and capitalism are going head-to-head. For more, see www.pbs.org/independentlens/vietnam after May 9.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

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CENSORED IN AMERICA

Each year Project Censored picks the top 25 stories that were "overlooked, under-reported, or self-censored" by the major media and compiles them in a book.

The stories are chosen from 700 to 1,000 news nominees. This year's top story: the rise of inequality and the decline of the middle class in America. Specifically, the rich—the top 5 percent—are getting richer, while the rest of us—95 percent—are losing ground. Inequality in America has increased dramatically since the late 1970s.

If this is news to you, that's probably because the mass media self-censor important news and trends, according to Project Censored, which operates out of Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, California, and tries to shine a spotlight on "news that didn't make the news."

The current book, along with more information about the project, is available at www.projectcensored.org.

PHOTO: EMPICS SPORTS PHOTO AGENCY

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Board Certified

How a novice became a master teacher with a little help from her friends.

BY JULIE HUTCHESON-DOWNWIND

WHEN I STARTED TEACHING 14 YEARS AGO, I was the only kindergarten teacher in the school. I had no mentor, no feedback. An administrator came by three times a year for 15 minutes, wrote "Everything's fine" on a little piece of paper, and that was it. I couldn't tell how well I was doing—compared to what? What was teaching supposed to look like? It was very frustrating.

At the time, I was teaching at a predominantly American Indian school. Most of my children were from my tribe, Ojibwe (Anishinabe). I wanted to be the best teacher I could be so I could give my students every opportunity to experience success in education. I attended many trainings and tried every new initiative, but what I was really looking for was a way to compare my teaching to that of experienced professionals teaching students of the same age in the same content area.

Julie Hutcheson-Downwind says she needs to understand not just the content to be taught, but also the mind of the learner.

"There are manuals that tell us what content we need to teach, but not often how to teach it. It's in the how that the magic happens."

Finally in my fourth year, a colleague gave me a copy of the standards for National Board Certification. I felt that they were descriptive of accomplished teaching, yet not prescriptive. Knowing that they were written by teachers in the field, I felt they were authentic and of the highest quality. I finally had a road map to follow to become the teacher I wanted to be.

There were 20 of us who went through the certification process together, eight in the early childhood group, from many different kinds of schools. We met twice a month, with the assistance of a facilitator and a group of National Board-certified teachers from the previous year. The most memorable part of the process was working with so many wonderful teachers. We didn't have release time for visiting classrooms, but we watched each other's videotapes and talked over our work. I finally had a place to share with other teachers. When people gave feedback, it was not evaluative, but "this is what I do to address a particular standard."

It was difficult. Anyone who commits to this process is taking a risk, opening themselves up to self-examination and examination by others. But I feel that teaching practice improves wherever the National Board standards are examined. It is not the final result—whether a teacher gets National Board certified—it is using the standards to guide instruction that leads to accomplished teaching.

It was hard to keep working at it with all the other demands on my time. Often, it was eight o'clock at night before I could get to my certification work, and I was tired. I was in an urban area, in one of the toughest schools.

We each put together portfolios with videotapes, student work samples, written commentaries on our lessons: what I taught and why I felt it demonstrated meeting a standard.

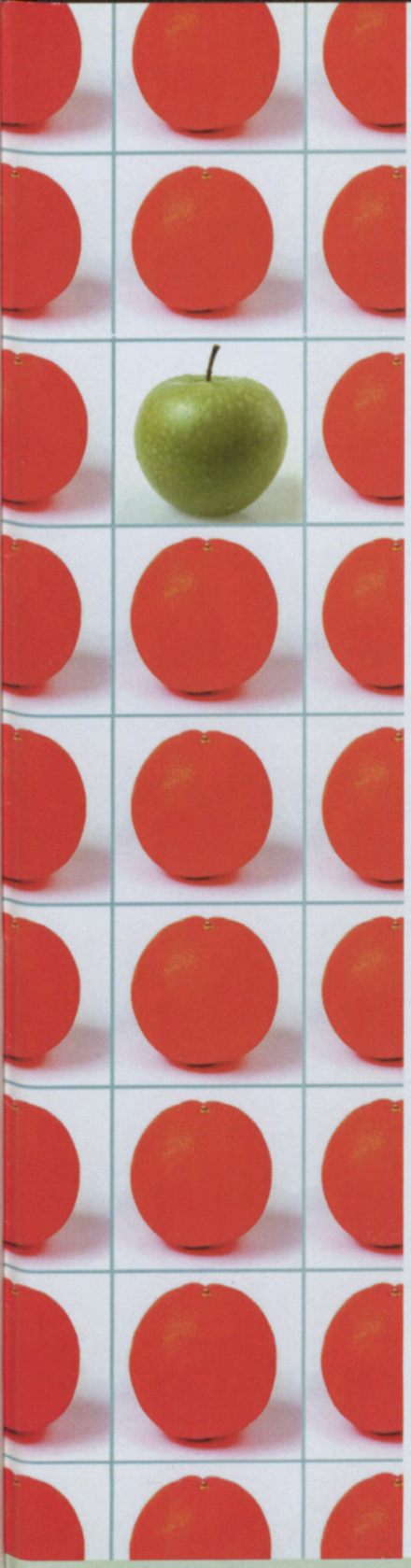
I still keep the standards. My book is pretty tattered at this point because I use it. Those standards have stood the test of time, and I still ask myself, am I doing this? What needs improvement? For example, the standards tell us that "play can be an important vehicle for integrating and understanding content across the curriculum." For my children, play is important. I may teach them math with games and songs because they learn best that way. The certification process made me more aware that we need to teach the material in ways that help children retain it.

There are manuals that tell us what content we need to teach, but not often how to teach it. It's in the how that the magic happens.

Almost 10 years have gone by. Many things have changed in education and my practice has evolved. But as I begin the process of renewing my National Board Certification, I still see the strength and guidance in the standards. They still provide the road map to the kind of teacher I want to be, the kind I want for my own children.

JULIE HUTCHESON-DOWNWIND teaches kindergarten at her neighborhood school, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Find more about National Board Certification at www.nea.org/neatodayextra.

PHOTO: JANET HOSTETTER



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